



0 09652540 1927 3

THE HOWDIE & Other Tales by JOHN GALT





THE HOWDIE
AND OTHER TALES

THE HOWDIE

AND OTHER TALES

By JOHN GALT

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY WILLIAM ROUGHEAD

186220.

4.1.24.

T. N. FOULIS, Ltd.
Edinburgh & London

This work is published by

T. N. FOULIS, Ltd.

EDINBURGH: 15 Frederick Street

LONDON: 91 Great Russell Street, W.C.

BOSTON, U.S.A.: 124 Chestnut Street

(*i.e. Roy Phillips, Agent*)

And may also be ordered through the following agencies
where the work may be examined

AUSTRALASIA: The Oxford University Press,
Cathedral Buildings, 205 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

CANADA: W. C. Bell, 25 Richmond Street West, Toronto

DENMARK: Aaboulevard 28, Copenhagen
(*Norrebros Boghandel*)

*Published in November
Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-three*

PS
8413
A57H6
1923

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY PILLANS AND WILSON, EDINBURGH

TO
THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE GALT
ONE OF THE JUDGES OF THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH FOR MANITOBA
AND A GRANDSON OF THE NOVELIST
THESE
TALES OF A GRANDFATHER
ARE
BY THE EDITOR
GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	ix
I. THE HOWDIE	3
II. SAWNEY AT DONCASTER	31
III. THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA	41
IV. THE CHIEF: OR, THE GAEL AND THE SASSENACH	113
V. THE JOKE	173
VI. MY FATHER'S HOUSE	209
VII. THE GUDEWIFE	223
VIII. THE MEM	245
IX. THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT	263

INTRODUCTION

OF the handful of tales here collected the first is altogether virgin to the printer; the rest, resuscitated at the cost of some time and trouble from their long sleep in bygone magazines, have not before been published in volume form. Good wine is proverbially said to need no bush, and these stories might be left to speak for themselves, were it not for the regrettable fact that to many well-read folk their author's name is unfamiliar and his fame unknown. Elsewhere I have given recently some account of both, and there is now neither room nor occasion to deal in detail with his life and work.*

John Galt was born at Irvine in Ayrshire in 1779 and died at Greenock in 1839. His time was unequally devoted to the service of two masters: literature and commerce: with the unsatisfactory results foretold in scripture. Through no fault of his own, his material schemes miscarried, though modern Canada owes much to his endeavours—he is namefather to one of her cities and the founder of another, and has contributed to her judicial Bench a son and grandson. His great literary gifts suffered from the distractions of his mercantile pursuits; had he but taken more seriously the practice of his art, his reputation as a man of letters would have

* "The Centenary of 'The Entail,'" *Juridical Review*, March 1923.

INTRODUCTION

been better established. But, alas, he ever regarded literary fame as an object far inferior to his favourite hobby, "the settlement of colonies"; and though a born story-teller, exceptionally endowed, his best years were wasted in wranglings with colonial governors and unconscionable directors of land companies, to the prejudice of his real gift and the impoverishment of his health and pocket.* How he contrived, in such forbidding circumstances, to produce among much ephemeral work a series of unquestioned masterpieces, affords matter of amazement. *The Ayrshire Legatees*, *Annals of the Parish*, *The Provost*, *Sir Andrew Wylie* (in the Scottish scenes), *The Entail*, *Ringan Gilhaize*, and *The Last of the Lairds*, each in its several way is worthy of a place on the shelf beside the *Waverley Novels*, and greater praise hath no Scots writer than this. As a contemporary of "the Great Unknown" and a fellow-labourer with him in the same field, Galt's gleanings have been largely lost sight of in view of the glorious harvest of Scott. Yet his genius owed nothing to the master-magician, for the *Annals* was written before the publication of *Waverley*, and his gifts and graces, though less bountiful than those of Sir Walter, are wholly individual and unique. Only the splendour of "the Scotch Novels" could have so outshone his admirable and genial light.

Of the cloud of witnesses who have borne testimony to the fine quality of Galt's best work I have but space

* "It has been only when I had nothing else to do that I have had recourse to this secondary pursuit."—*Autobiography*, I, 85.

INTRODUCTION

for one: Professor Wilson—in Scottish letters, *clarum et venerabile nomen*. Here is the verdict of “ Christopher North ”:—

Mr Galt is a man of genius, and some of his happiest productions will live in the literature of his country. His humour is rich, rare, and racy, and peculiar withal, entitling him to the character of originality—a charm that never fadeth away; he has great power in the humble, the homely-pathetic, and he is conversant, not only with many modes and manners of life, but with much of its hidden and more mysterious spirit.*

You will note that in the judgment of Wilson our author's happiest productions only shall remain under the sun among the posterities; and it is unfortunately true that, wielding as he did his powers so carelessly, Galt wrote much that now availeth nothing. But I believe, and venture to hope, that these tales and sketches here first brought together, for the selection of which I am responsible, if not conceived in the grand scale of *Rintin* or *Gilhaize* or executed on the high level of the *Annals* and *The Entail*, are yet well worthy of preservation as examples of their author's versatility and skill in the exercise of his craft, and should be appreciated accordingly by admirers of his amiable and kindly genius. The book will rank as a Galt first edition, and as such may at least find sanctuary in the closets of the curious. Should it meet with that measure of success which in my partial opinion its attractions merit, I have found material enough to furnish forth another volume of uncollected stories by the same hand.

* *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, III, 73. Edinburgh: 1876.

INTRODUCTION

The author's own orthography, etc., has been retained throughout, Galt's originality extending to these things also. I have not supplied a glossary. Those who approach vernacular Scots as a foreign tongue may consult the dictionary of the learned Jamieson; for such as be of the redeemed and sealed of the tribe of Waverley, it were impertinent to explain the meaning of "clan-jamphry" or "straemash." And though I have met with intelligent Scots who knew not the signification of "oe" (grandchild), generally speaking the Doric of Galt is easy of assimilation even by Sassenach stomachs, and should present few stumbling-blocks to the educated reader.

.

The original manuscript of "The Howdie" was bought by me from a well-known London bookseller, who purchased it at a sale at Sotheby's. Pursuing my researches into its past, I found that the MS. was sold there by instructions of its former owner, Sir Robert Simpson, Writer to the Signet, Edinburgh, who has favoured me with an account of its previous history, so far as known to him :—

The manuscript was at one time in the possession of John Fletcher Macfarlan, surgeon and chemist in Edinburgh, who died on 20th February 1861. He was Chairman of T. B. Macaulay's Committee in Edinburgh during the period of the latter's representation of the City in Parliament. Numerous letters dealing with the Free Church of Scotland and various questions of public interest in the '40's and '50's were addressed to him by the member. Along with these letters, articles and verses by De Quincey, Coleridge, Carlyle, and others were left to Mr Mac-

INTRODUCTION

farlan's three daughters, all of whom reached old age. These ladies, after selling their house in Edinburgh and settling in Madeira, presented the documents to me. In 1920 the MS. of "The Howdie" was sold at one of Sotheby's London sales. It is understood that many of the manuscripts were given to Mr Macfarlan by William Tait, of *Edinburgh Magazine* fame. I think he was related to Mr Macfarlan.*

Galt was an occasional contributor to Tait's journal, where probably "The Howdie" was destined to appear, but like so many of its author's projects, it was never finished. Although a mere fragment, it bears unmistakably the hallmark of the genuine Galt and as such deserves rescue from oblivion. The first few pages of the MS. are holograph of the author; the remainder is in the handwriting of divers amanuenses, on whom in his later years impaired health compelled him to depend.† Corrected and revised throughout by his own hand, the earlier portion may have formed part of that "great mass of book-materials, the fruits of my solitary *noctes* in Canadian wayside taverns," of which in 1829 he wrote to his friend "Delta."‡

Mrs Blithe, the protagonist, is a member of the indispensable profession boldly practised by Mrs Gamp in Kingsgate Street, High Holborn, and by the more equivocal "Mrs B——," who ministered to Moll Flanders,

* MS. Note by Sir R. R. Simpson, W.S.

† "His amanuensis was a boy, save when some accidental visitor was good enough to take the pen."—*Autobiography*, I, x.

‡ *Biographical Memoir of John Galt*, by D. M. Moir, p. lxxvii. Edinburgh: 1841.

INTRODUCTION

“ at the Sign of the Cradle.” One regrets that Galt did not complete the sketch, which is cast in his happiest form—the autobiographic—by narrating, as he purposed, the future fortunes of the respective infants whose births he so agreeably records. There is a quaint *naïveté* in the good dame’s gossiping chronicle that makes one wish to have fared farther in her company.

“ Sawney at Doncaster,” though but a *jeu d’esprit*, I have included because it is of 1823, the golden year of *The Entail* and *Ringan*, when Galt was at the pinnacle of his powers. Besides, it is of itself in its small way sufficiently entertaining.

For the third tale, which first appeared in *Maga* under the title of “ Scotch and Yankees,” I have reverted to the original and more attractive one, “ The Aunt in Virginia.” Dr Moir, writing of Galt’s life in New York in 1827, records: “ While in that city he wrote a little dramatic piece, called ‘ The Aunt in Virginia,’ which he afterwards converted into a tale for *Blackwood*.” Galt had, it seems, written a farce, poking mild fun at certain American peculiarities which tickled his fancy. This was vehemently resented by the denizens of the Land of Freedom; so he good-naturedly promised “ to write another farce in which liberties as great should be taken with his own countrymen.” Hence “ The Aunt in Virginia.”* Described by the author as a caricature, it is highly diverting nonsense, and provides in the character of Mrs Clatterpenny another of those loqua-

* *Biographical Memoir*, pp. lxi-lxii.

INTRODUCTION

cious and resourceful matrons in whom his readers rejoice, and of whom Leddy Grippy is, in Dickens's phrase, the very pink and pineapple. It is pleasant here to renew our acquaintance with Mr Threeper, the wily Edinburgh advocate, who figures so prominently in *The Entail*. The scene in which Mrs Clatterpenny assumes the rôle of chamber counsel and delivers a learned opinion, recalls the forensic triumphs of the gifted Leddy Grippy and has something of her racy humour.

"The Chief" is an hilarious study of Highland poverty and pride. The eccentric qualities of the hero are plainly intended as a good-humoured skit upon the foibles of Alastair Ranaldson Macdonell of Glengarry, the friend of Scott and prototype of his Fergus MacIvor, whose pretentiousness and pomposity are happily ridiculed, though the truculence of the real Glengarry is pretermitted.* Galt has elsewhere recounted a ludicrous incident which befell that Chieftain at the Coronation of George the Fourth, when his handling of a pistol was construed as *lèse majesté*.†

"The Joke" is an example of the sort of humour which, when the young Dickens first put pen to paper, was found acceptable and amusing. But there is a fashion even in fun, and we are too sophisticated nowadays to applaud a playful baronet who, feigning to be

* Cf. the Editor's *Glengarry's Way and Other Studies*, pp. 3-26. Edinburgh: 1922.

† *The Steam-Boat*, pp. 241-249. Edinburgh: 1822.

INTRODUCTION

in love, takes captive a silly widow, fools her to the top of her bent, and has his face slapped for his pains. Still here, as always when he touches Scotland and the Scots, Galt paints with a sure hand, and the sketches of the vain Mrs Kittle and her prudent mother, though in miniature, are executed from the life. If, like the celebrated baby in *Mr Midshipman Easy*, "The Joke" is but a little one, and is besides neither very subtle nor commendable to modern taste, I would counsel the reader to take heart: there is balm in Gilead.

"My Father's House" is an exercise in that mood of Galt which Professor Wilson terms the "homely-pathetic," and is set in somewhat of a graver key than its companions. The return of the mutilated son from the war will strike in the heart of many readers a sympathetic chord. The savoury description of the gigantic pie is surely a personal reminiscence :—

It was the biggest I had ever seen; and the preceding evening, when warm, not only the most delicious in festal fragrance, but, when cold, by far the best I ever tasted—beyond all comparison better than the one made of four and twenty blackbirds and set before the king. Yet were not these all its rich and rare virtues. The cook had, with the genius of Praxiteles, crowned the apex with a bird, which she assured us was an eagle, and which could not be enough admired for its expanded wings, and two legs most wonderfully joined into one.*

That this was not a pasty of the mind, a false creation, would appear from the gusto with which Galt recounts its charms.

* "My Father's House," *infra*, p. 213.

INTRODUCTION

“ The Gudewife ” is, to my mind, the pick of the basket. Here Galt is at home, *son naturel*: shrewd observation, pawky humour, admirable Scots. The story of her married life with Mr Thrifter, that “ bien man ”—“ he had parts in two vessels, besides his own shop, and was sponisible for a nest-egg of lying money ”—written as a warning and exemplar to young wives, is a compendium of the gentle art of husband-breaking. Whether it be her initial conquest of his bachelor custom “ in the morning before breakfast to toast his shoes against the fender and forenent the hearth ” in the parlour; their delicious difference about the state of the weather—a bit of insight uncannily real, but Galt was a married man; the postponement of the christening; the weaning of the “ tyrant bairn ”; or the inspired observe of Mr Thrifter that the child would “ just turn out a randy like her mother,” whence his spouse, snatching victory from defeat, contrives his final subjugation—all is conceived and carried out with that perfect knowledge of Scots character wherein at his best Galt has, save one, no rival, and in the style that particularly pleased Stevenson: “ in which a thing is said or an effect rendered with propriety.”

“ The Mem,” when I found it first in *Fraser*, came upon me as a delightful surprise. It forms an additional chapter to the *Annals of the Parish*, and in delicacy of treatment and truth to life is not undeserving of that high association. The life-story of the schoolmistress, Miss Peerie—what a wonderful flair Galt has for names!

xvii

INTRODUCTION

—is an engaging page from the papers of our old friend, the Reverend Micah Balwhidder of Dalmailing. This wise virgin—"Greek and Latin were to her household words, and she could read Hebrew as easily as if it had been the A B C"—has, despite her erudition, nothing of the aridity of Miss Blimber, "dry and sandy with working in the graves of deceased languages." She is eminently human, and her ineffectual strivings with an adverse fate are far removed from the cool achievement of the abstruse Cornelia.

No selection from Galt's work would be truly representative that failed to contain some reference to Canadian emigration. "The Metropolitan Emigrant" is a late essay; no more does Galt speak of Canada and golden joys: the gilt is faded from the colonial gingerbread for which he had so long hungered, and the misfortunes of Stephen Needles might serve as a parable of the author's own experience. One gleam of humour illumines this record of failure and disappointment: the accommodating neighbour who, having "killed a man himself," assumes that Stephen has murdered his wife and offers to help him to bury the body!

.

"For a man to be both a genius and a Scotsman is the very stage for tragedy," observes the portentous Shade so magically evoked by Mr Laurence Housman in his *Echo de Paris*. And there could hardly be an apter illustration of that truth than the fact of John Galt writing *Lawrie Todd* in the King's Bench, and la-

INTRODUCTION

bouring to the end like Sir Walter at ungrateful tasks, beneath the burden of disease and debt. The wonder is not that both writers were often uninspired, but that they should be able to bring forth from the rock of adversity living waters for the refreshment of the generations.

Still, as in the case of Scott, we must remember that if the night that came to Galt was fraught with woe, he had enjoyed, while it was yet day with him, his competent share of sunshine. From the *Annals* to *The Entail* he was acclaimed an honourable rival of "the Great Unknown"; and though his commercial ventures came to grief, he had at least what he esteemed a run for his money. Even the losing battle waged with Canadian Jacks-in-office afforded, to one of his combative spirit, a stimulating relief. And surely no follower of the exigent chivalry of letters ever won his spurs on terms less onerous. He wrote when he pleased and as he pleased; the evil and the good to him were both alike, and for him, in the aesthetic sense, the voice of conscience was not clamant. He found happiness, too, in his family relations, and lived to see his sons succeed where he had failed: one became Finance Minister for the Dominions; another, Chief Justice of Ontario. So that, after all, out of life's lucky-bag, despite much vain and ineffective dipping, Galt managed to secure some prizes.

WILLIAM ROUGHEAD.

I

· THE HOWDIE:
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A

THE HOWDIE: *AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

PART ONE ANENT BIRTHS

WHEN my gudeman departed this life, he left me with a heavy handful of seven childer, the youngest but a baby at the breast and the elder, a lassie, scant of eight years old. With such a small family what could a lanerly woman do? Greatly was I grieved, not only for the loss of our breadwinner, but the quenching of that cheerful light which was my solace and comfort in straightened circumstances, and in the many cold and dark hours which the needs of our necessitous condition obliged us to endure.

James Blithe was my first and only jo, and but for that armed man, Poverty, who sat ever demanding at our hearth, there never was a brittle minute in the course of our wedded life. It was my pleasure to gladden him at home when out-of-door vexations ruffled his temper, which seldom came to pass, for he was an honest young man and pleasant among those with whom his lot was cast. I have often since his death thought, in calling him to mind, that it was by his natural sweet nature the Lord was pleased when He took him to Himself, to awaken the sympathy of others for me and the bairns in our utmost distress.

He was the head gairdner to the Laird of Rigs as his

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

father had been before him, and the family had him in great respect ; besides many a present of useful things which they gave to us when we were married, they came to our wedding—a compliment that James often said was like the smell of the sweet briar in a lown and dewy evening, a cherishment that seasoned happiness. It was not, however, till he was taken away that I experienced the extent of their kindness. The ladies of the family were most particular to me; the Laird himself on the sabbath after the burial paid me a very edifying visit, and to the old Leddy Dowager, his mother, I owe the meal that has ever since been in the basin by which I have been enabled to bring up my childer in the fear of God.

The Leddy was really a managing, motherly character—no grass grew beneath her feet when she had a turn to do, as was testified by my case, for when the minister's wife put it into her head that I might do well in the midwife line, Mrs Forceps being then in her declining years, she lost no time in getting me made, in the language of the Church and the Gospel, her helper and successor—a blessing it was at the time, and the whole parish has, with a constancy of purpose, continued to treat me far above my deserts, for I have ever been sure of a shortcoming in my best endeavours to give satisfaction.

But it's not to speak of the difficulties that the hand of a considerate Providence has laid upon me with a sore weight for an earthly nature to bear, that I have

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

sat down to indite this history book. I only intend hereby to shew how many strange things have come to pass in my douce way of life, and sure am I that in every calling, no matter however humble, peradventures will take place that ought to be recorded for the instruction even of the wisest. Having said this I will now proceed with my story.

All the har'st before the year of dearth Mrs Forceps, my predecessor, had been in an ailing condition, in so much that on the Hallowe'en she was laid up, and never after was taken out of her bed a living woman. Thus it came to pass that before the turn of the year the midwifery business of our countryside came into my hands in the natural way.

I cannot tell how it happened that there was little to do in the way of trade all that winter, but it began to grow into a fashion that the genteeler order of ladies went into the towns to have their han'lings amang the doctors. It was soon seen, however, that they had nothing to boast of by that manœuvre, for their gudemen thought the cost overcame the profit, and thus, although that was to a certainty a niggardly year, and great part of the next no better, it pleased the Lord by the scanty upshot of the har'st before spoken of, that whatever the ladies thought of the doctors, their husbands kept the warm side of frugality towards me and other poor women that had nothing to depend upon but the skill of their ten fingers.

Mrs Forceps being out of the way I was called in, and

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

my first case was with an elderly woman that was long thought by all her friends to be past bearing, but when she herself came to me and rehearsed the state she was in, with a great sough for fear instead of a bairn it might turn out a tympany, I called to her mind how Sarah the Patriarchess, the wife of Abraham, was more than four score before Isaac was born, which was to her great consolation, for she was a pious woman in the main, and could discern in that miracle of Scripture an admonition to her to be of good cheer.

From that night poor Mrs Houselycat grew an altered woman and her gudeman, Thomas Houselycat, was as cadgy a man as could be, at the prospect of having an Isaac in his old age, for neither he nor his wife had the least doubt that they were to be blessed with a man child. At last the fullness of time came and Thomas having provided a jar of cinnamon brandy for the occasion, I was duly called in.

Well do I remember the night that worthy Thomas himself came for me with a lantern or a bowit in his hand. It was pitch dark, the wind rampaged among the trees, the sleet was just vicious, and every drop was as salt as pickle. He had his wife's shawl tied over his hat by a great knot under the chin, and a pair of huggars drawn over his shoes and above his knee: he was just a curiosity to see.

Coming for me I went with him, and to be sure when I got to the house there was a gathering; young and old were there, all speaking together, widows and grannies

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

giving advice, and new-married wives sitting in the expectation of getting insight. Really it was a ploy, and no wonder that there was such a collection, for Mrs Houselycat was a woman well stricken in years, and it could not be looked upon as anything less than an inadvertancy that she was ordained to be again a mother. I very well remember that her youngest daughter of the first clecking was there, a married woman, with a wean at her knee, I'se warrant a year and a half old; it could both walk alone and say many words almost as intelligible as the minister in the poopit when it was a frosty morning, for the cold made him there shavelin gabbit and every word he said was just an oppression to his feckless tongue.

By and by the birth came to pass, but och on! the long faces that were about me when it took place, for instead of a lad bairn it proved a lassie, and to increase the universal dismay at this come-to-pass it turned out that the bairn's cleeding had in a way out of the common been prepared for a man child, which was the occasion of the innocent being all the time of its nursing in appearance a very doubtful creature.

The foregoing case is the first that I could properly say was my own, for Mrs Forceps had a regular finger in the pie in all my heretofores. It was, however, good erles, for no sooner had I got Mrs Houselycat on her feet again than I received a call from the head Inns in the town, from a Captain's lady that was overtaken there as the regiment was going through.

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In this affair there was something that did not just please me in the conduct of Mrs Facings, as the gentlewoman was called, and I jaloused by what I saw with the tail of my eye that she was no better than a light woman. However, in the way of trade it does not do to stand on trifles of that sort, for ours is a religious trade, as witness what is said in the Bible of the midwives of the Hebrews; and if it pleased Providence to ordain childer to be, it is no less an ordained duty of the midwife to help them into the world. But I had not long been satisfied in my own mind that the mother was no better than she should be than my tender feelings were sorely tried, for she had a most extraordinary severe time of it and I had but a weak hope that she would get through. However, with my help and the grace of God, she did get through, and I never saw before nor since so brave a baby as was that night born.

Scarcely was the birth over than Mrs Facings fell into a weakly dwam that was very terrifying, and if the Captain was not her gudeman he was as concerned about her as any true gudeman could be, and much more than some I could name who have the best of characters.

It so happened that this Mrs Facings had been, as I have said, overtaken on the road and had nothing prepared for a sore foot, although she well knew that she had no time to spare. This was very calamitous and what was to be done required a consideration. I was for wrapping the baby in a blanket till the morning, when

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I had no misdoubt of gathering among the ladies of the town a sufficient change of needfu' baby clouts; but among other regimental clanjamphry that were around this left-to-hersel' damsel, was a Mrs Gooseskin, the Drum-major's wife, a most devising character. When I told her of our straights and jeopardy she said to give myself no uneasiness, for she had seen a very good substitute for child linen and would set about making it without delay.

What she proposed to do was beyond my comprehension, but she soon returned into the room with a box in her hand filled with soft-teazed wool which she set down on a chair at the bed stock, and covering it with an apron she pressed the wool under the apron into a hollow shape like a goldfinch's nest, wherein she laid the infant, and covering it up with the apron she put more wool over it and made it as snug as a silkworm in a cocoon, as it has been described to me. The sight of this novelty was, however, an affliction, for if she had intended to smother the bairn she could not have taken a more effectual manner, and yet the baby lived and thrived, as I shall have occasion to rehearse by and by. For Mrs Facings had a tedious recovery and was not able to join him that in a sense was her gudeman, and the regiment, which was to me a great cause of affliction, for I thought that it might be said that her case was owing to my being a new hand and not skilful enough. It thus came to pass that she, when able to stand the shake, was moved to private lodgings, where

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

for a season she dwin't and dwindled, and at last her life went clean out, but her orphan bairn was spared amang us, and was a great means of causing a tenderness of heart to arise among the ladies, chiefly on account of its most thoughtless and ne'er-do-weel father, who never inquired after he left the town concerning the puir thing. So that if there had not been a seed of charity bred by its orphan condition, nobody can tell what would have become of it. The saving hand of Providence was, however, manifested, and old Miss Peggy Needle, who had all her life been out of the body about cats and dogs, grew just extraordinar to make a pet, in the place of them all, of the laddie Willie Facings. But, as I have said, I will by and by have to tell more about him, so on that account I will make an end of the second head of my discourse and proceed to the next, which was one of a most piteous kind.

In our parish there lived a young lad, a stickit minister, not very alluring in his looks, indeed, to say the truth, he was by many on account of them thought to be not far short of a haverel, for he was lank and most uncomely, being in-kneed; but for all that, the Minister said he was a young man of great parts and had not only a streak of geni, but a vast deal of inordinate erudition. He went commonly by the name of Dominie Quarto, and it came to pass that he set his affections on a weel-faured lassie, the daughter of Mrs Stoups who keepit the Thistle Inns. In this there was nothing wonderful, for she was a sweet maiden and nobody ever saw

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

her without wishing her well. But she could not abide the Dominie, and indeed it was no wonder, for he certainly was not a man to pleasure a woman's eye. Her affections were settled on a young lad called Jock Sym, a horse couper, a blithe, heartsome young man of a genteel manner and in great repute, therefore, among the gentlemen.

He won Mally Stoups' heart; they were married, and in the fullness of time thereafter her pains came on and I was sent to ease her. She lay in a back room that looked into their pleasant garden. Half up the lower casement of the window there was a white muslin curtain, made out of one of her mother's old-fashioned tamboured aprons, drawn across from side to side, for the window had no shutters.

It would be only to distress the reader to tell what she suffered; long she struggled and weak she grew, and a sough of her desperate case went up and down the town like the plague that walketh in darkness. Many came to inquire for her, both gentle and simple, and it was thought that the Dominie would have been in the crowd of callers, but he came not.

In the midst of her suffering, when I was going about my business in the room with the afflicted lying-in woman, I happened to give a glint to the window, and startled I was to see like a ghost looking over the white curtain the melancholious visage of Dominie Quarto, with watery eyes glistening like two stars in the candle light.

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I told one of the women who happened to be in the way, to go out to the sorrowful young man and tell him not to look in at the window. Whereupon she went out and remonstrated with him for some time. While she was gone sweet Mally Stoups and her unborn baby were carried away to Abraham's bosom. This was a most unfortunate thing, and I went out before the straightening board could be gotten with a heavy heart on account of my poor family, that might suffer if I was found guilty of being to blame.

I had not gone beyond the threshold of the backdoor that led into the garden when I discerned a dark figure between me and the westling scad of the setting moon. On going towards it I was greatly surprised to find the weeping Dominie, who was keeping watch for the event there, and had just heard what had happened by one of the women telling another.

This symptom of true love and tenderness made me forget my motherly anxieties and I did all I could to console the poor lad, but he was not to be comforted, saying: "It was a great trial when it was ordained that she should lie in the arms of Jock Sym, but it's far waur to think that the kirkyard hole is to be her bed and her bridegroom the worm."

Poor forlorn creature! I had not a word to say, indeed he made my heart swell in my bosom, and I could never forget the way in which he grat over my hand, that he took between both of his as a dear thing that he was prone to fondle and moan over.

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

But his cutting grief did not end that night; on the Sabbath evening following, as the custom is in our parish, Mrs Sym was ordained to be interred, and there was a great gathering of friends and neighbours, for both she and her gudeman were well thought of. Everybody expected the Dominie would be there, for his faithfulness was spoken of by all pitiful tongues, but he stayed away for pure grief; he hid himself from the daylight and the light of every human eye. In the gloaming, however, after, as the betheral went to ring the eight o'clock bell, he saw the Dominie standing with a down-cast look near the new grave, all which made both a long and a sad story for many a day among us. I doubt if it is forgotten yet; as for me I never thought of it without a pang, but all trades have their troubles, and the death of a young wife and her unborn baby in her nineteenth year is not one of the least that I have had to endure in mine.

But although I met like many others in my outset in life both mortifications and difficulties, and what was worse than all, I could not say that I was triumphant in my endeavours, yet, like the doctors, either good luck or experience made me gradually gather a repute for skill and discernment, in so much that I became just wonderful for the request I was in. It is therefore needless for me to make a strive for the entertainment of the reader by rehearsing all the han'lings that I had; but as some of them were of a notable kind I will pass over the generality and only make a *nota bene* here of those that

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

were particular, as well as the births of the babies that afterwards came to be something in the world.

Between the death of Mally Stoups and the Whitsunday of that year there was not much business in my line, not above two cases; but on the day after I had a doing: no less than of twins in a farmer's family that was already overstocked with weans to a degree that was just a hardship. But in that case there was a testimony that Providence never sends mouths into the world without at the same time giving the where-with-all to fill them.

James Mashlan was a decent, douce, hard-working, careful man, and his wife was to all wives the very pattern of frugality; but with all their ettling they could scarcely make the two ends of the year to meet. Owing to this, when it was heard in the parish that she had brought forth a Jacob and Esau there was a great condolence, and the birth that ought to have caused both mirth and jocundity was not thought to be a gentle dispensation. But shortsighted is the wisdom of man, and even of women likewise, for from that day James Mashlan began to bud and prosper, and is now the toppingest man far or near, and his prosperity sprang out of what we all thought would be a narrowing of his straightened circumstances.

All the gentry of the countryside when they heard the tidings sent Mrs Mashlan many presents, and stocked her press with cleeding for her and the family. It happened also that at this time there was a great concourse of Englishers at the Castle with my Lord, and

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

one of them, a rattling young gentleman, proposed that they should raise a subscription for a race-purse, promising that if his horse won he would give the purse for the behoof of the twins. Thus it came to pass that a shower of gold one morning fell on James Mashlan as he was holding the plough, for that English ramplor's horse, lo and behold! won the race, and he came over with all the company with the purse in his hands full of golden guineas, galloping upon James. And James and his wife sat clogging on this nest egg till they have hatched a fortune. For the harvest following, his eldest son was able to join the shearers, and from that day Plenty, like a fat carlin, visited him daily. Year after year his childer that were of the male gender grew better and better helps, so that he enlarged his farm and has since built the sclate house by the waterside, that many a one for its decent appearance cannot but think it is surely the Minister's manse.

From that time I, too, got a lift in the world, for it happened that a grand lady in the family way came on a visit to the Castle, and by some unaccountable accident she was prematurely brought to bed there. No doctor being at hand nearer than the borough town I was sent for, and before one could be brought I had helped into the world the son and heir of an ancient family, for the which I got ten golden guineas, a new gown that is still my best honesty, and a mutch that many a one came to see, for it is made of French lace. The lady insisted on me to wear it at the christening, which the

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

doctor was not overly pleased to hear tell of, thinking that I might in time clip the skirts of his practice.

For a long time after the deliverance of that lady I had a good deal to do in the cotters' houses, and lucky it was for me that I had got the guineas as aforesaid, for the commonality have not much to spare on an occasion; and I could not help thinking how wonderful are the ways of Providence, for the lady's gift enabled me to do my duty among the others with a lighter heart than I could have afforded to do had the benison been more stinted.

All the remainder of that year, the winter and the next spring, was without a remarkable, but just on the eve of summer a very comical accident happened.

An old woman came into the parish, nobody could tell how, and was called Lucky Nanse, who made her bread by distilling peppermint. Some said that now and then her house had the smell of whiskey, but how it came, whether from her still or the breath of her nostrils, was never made out to a moral certainty. This carlin had been in her day a by-ordinar woman and was a soldier's widow forby. At times she would tell stories of marvels she had seen in America, where she said there was a moose so big that a man could not lift its head. Once old Mr Izet, the precentor, to whom she was telling anent this beast, said it was not possible; at which she waxed very wroth, and knocking her neives together in his face, she told him that he was no gentleman to misdoubt her honour. Mr Izet, who had not much of the sweet-milk of human kindness in his na-

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

ture, was so provoked at this freedom, that he snapped his fingers as he turned to go away, and said she was no better than a ne'er-do-weel camp-randy. If she was oil before she was flame now, and dancing with her arms extended, she looted down, and grasping a gowpen of earth in each hand she scattered it with an air to the wind, and cried with a desperate voice that she did not value his opinion at the worth of that dirt.

By this time the uproar had disturbed the clachan, and at every door the women were looking out to see what was the hobbleshow, some with bairns in their arms and others with weans at their feet. Among the rest that happened to look out was Mrs Izet, who on seeing the jeopardy that her gudeman was in from that rabiator woman, ran to take him under her protection; but it was a rash action, for Lucky Nanse stood with her hands on her hanches and dared her to approach, threatening with some soldierlike words that if she came near she would close her daylight.

Mrs Izet was terrified and stood still.

"Home with you," said Nanse, "ye mud that ye are to think yourself on a par with pipeclay!" with other heteradox brags that were just a sport to hear. In the meantime the precentor was walking homeward, and called to his wife to come away and leave that tempest and whirlwind with her own wrack and carry.

Lucky Nanse had by this time spent her ammunition, and unable to find another word sufficiently vicious, she ran up to him and spat in his face.

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Human nature could stand no more, and the precentor, forgetting himself and his dignity in the parish, lifted his foot and gave her a kick which caused her to fall on her back. There she lay sprawling and speechless, and made herself at last lie as like a corpse as it was possible. Everybody thought that she was surely grievously hurt, though Mr Izet said his foot never touched her, and a hand barrow was got to carry her home. All present were in great dismay, for they thought Mr Izet had committed a murder and would be hanged in course of law, but I may be spared from describing the dolorosity that was in our town that night.

Lucky Nanse being carried home on the barrow like a carcase, was put to bed, where, when she had lain some time, she opened a comical eye for a short space, and then to all intents and purposes seemed in the dead-throes. It was just then that I, drawn into the house by the din of the straemash, looked over a neighbour's shoulder; but no sooner did the artful woman see my face than she gave a skirl of agony and cried that her time was come and the pains of a mother were upon her, at which to hear all the other women gave a shout as if a miracle was before them, for Nanse was above to all appearance three score; but she for a while so enacted her stratagem that we were in a terrification but it should be true. At last she seemed quite exhausted and I thought she was in the natural way, when in a jiffy she bounced up with a guffaw and drove us all pell-mell out of the house. The like of such a ploy had

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

never been heard of in our countryside. I was, however, very angry to be made such a fool of in my profession before all the people, especially as it turned out that the old woman was only capering in her cups.

Some time after this exploit another come-to-pass happened that had a different effect on the nerves of us all. This fell out by a sailor's wife, a young woman that came to lie in from Sandyporth with her mother, a most creditable widow that kept a huxtry shop for the sale of parliament cakes, candles, bone combs and prins, and earned a bawbee by the eidency of her spinning-wheel.

Mrs Spritsail, as the young woman was called, had a boding in her breast that she could not overcome, and was a pitiable object of despondency, from no cause. But women in her state are often troubled by similar vapours. Hers, however, troubled everybody that came near her and made her poor mother almost persuaded that she would not recover.

One night when she expected to be confined I was called in, but such a night as that was! At the usual hour the post-woman, Martha Dauner, brought a letter to the old woman from Sandyporth, sealed with a black wafer, which when Mrs Spritsail saw she grew as pale as a clout and gave a deep sigh. Alas! it was a sigh of prophecy, for the letter was to tell that her husband, John Spritsail, had tumbled overboard the night before and was drowned.

For some time the young widow sat like an image, making no moan; it was very frightful to see her. By

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

and by her time came on, and although it could not be said that her suffering was by common, she fell back again into that effigy state, which made her more dreadful to see than if she had been a ghost in its winding sheet, and she never moved from the posture she put herself in till all was over, and the living creature was turned into a clod of churchyard clay.

This, for a quiet calamity, is the most distressing in my chronicle, for it came about with little ceremony. Nobody was present with us, but only her sorrowful mother, on whose lap I laid the naked, new-born babe. Soon after the young widow departed to join her gude-man in Paradise. But as it is a mournful tale it would only be to hurt the reader's tender feelings to make a more particular account.

All my peradventures were not, however, of the same doleful kind, and there is one that I should mention, for it was the cause of meikle jocosity at the time, and for no short season after.

There lived in the parish a very old woman, upwards of four score. She was as bent in her body as a cow's horn and she supported herself with a staff in one hand, and for balance held up her gown behind with the other; in short she was a very antediluvian, something older than seemed the folk at that time of the earth.

This ancient crone was the grandmother to Lizzy Dadily, a light-headed, winsome lassie, that went to service in Glasgow, but many months she had not been there. When she came back all mouth and eyne, on the

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

same night her granny, old Maudelin, called on me. It was at the gloaming, I had not trimmed my crusie, but I had just mended the fire, which had not broken out, so that we commenced in an obscurity.

Of the history of old Maudelin I had never before heard any particulars, but her father, as she told me, was out in the rebellion of Mar's year, and if the true king had gotten his rights she would not have been a needful woman. This I have ever jaloused was vanity, for although it could not be said that she was positively an ill-doer, it was well known in the town that, old as she was, the conduct of her house in many points was not the best. Her daughter, the mother of Lizzy, was but a canary-headed creature; what became of her we never heard, for she went off with the soldiers one day, leaving Lizzy, a bastard bairn. How the old woman thereafter fenn't in her warsle with age and poverty was to many a one a mystery, especially as it was now and then seen that she had a bank guinea-note to change, and whom it cam frae was a marvel.

Lizzy coming home, her granny came to me, as I was saying, and after a while conversing in the twilight about this and that, she told me that she was afraid her oe had brought home her work, and that she didna doubt they would need the sleight of my hand in a short time, for that Lizzy had only got a month's leave to try the benefit of her native air, that of Glasgow, as with most young women, not agreeing with her.

I was greatly taken aback to hear her talk in such a

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

calm and methodical manner concerning Lizzy, whom I soon found was in that condition that would I'm sure have drawn tears of the heart's blood from every other grandmother in the clachan. Really, I was not well pleased to hear the sinful carlin talk in such a good-e'en and good-morn way about a guilt of that nature; and I said to her both hooly and fairly that I was not sure if I could engage myself in the business, for it went against my righteous opinion to make myself a means of filling the world with natural children.

The old woman was not just pleased to hear me say this, and without any honey on her lips she replied—

“Widow Blithe, this is an unco strain! and what for will ye no' do your duty to Lizzie Dadily? for I must have a reason, because the Minister or the magistrates of the borough shall ken of this.”

I was to be sure a little confounded to hear the frail though hardy old woman thus to speak her peremptors, but in my mild and methodical manner I answered her, and said—

“That no person in a trade with full hands ought to take a new turn, and although conscience, I would allow, had its weight with me, yet there was a stronger reason in my engagements to others.”

“Very well,” said Maudelin, and dortily rising, she gave a rap with her staff and said, “that there soon would be news in the land that I would hear of,” and away she went stotting out at the door, notwithstanding her age, like a birsled pea.

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

After she was gone I began to reflect, and I cannot say that I had just an ease of mind when I thought of what she had been telling anent her oe, but nothing more came to pass that night.

The following evening, however, about the same hour who should darken my door but the Minister himself! a most discreet man, who had always paid me a very sympathizing attention from the death of my gudeman. So I received him with the greatest respect, wondering what could bring him to see me at that doubtful hour. But no sooner had he taken a seat in the elbow chair than he made my hair stand on end at the wickedness and perfidy of the woman sec.

“ Mrs Blithe,” said he, “ I have come to have a serious word with you, and to talk with you on a subject that is impossible for me to believe. Last night that old Maudelin, of whom the world speaks no good, came to me with her granddaughter from Glasgow, both weeping very bitterly; the poor young lass had her apron tail at her face and was in great distress.

“ ‘ What is the matter with you? ’ said I,” quoth the Minister; “ and thereupon the piteous grandmother told me that her oe had been beguiled by a false manufacturing gentleman, and was thereby constrained to come back in a state of ignomony that was heartrending.

“ ‘ Good Maudelin, in what can I help you in your calamity? ’

“ ‘ In nothing, nothing,’ said she; ‘ but we are come to make a confession in time.’ ”

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

“ ‘ What confession? ’ quo’ I,” said the Minister.

“ ‘ Oh sir! ’ said she, ‘ it’s dreadful, but your counselling may rescue us from a great guilt. I have just been with Widow Blithe, the midwife, to bespeak her helping hand. Oh sir! speer no questions.’ ”

“ ‘ But,’ said the Minister, ‘ this is not a business to be trifled with. What did Mrs Blithe say to you? ’ ”

“ ‘ That Mrs Blithe,’ replied Maudelin, ‘ is a hidden woman; she made sport of my poor Lizzy’s misfortune, and said that the best I could do was to let her nip the craig of the bairn in the hour of its birth.’ ”

“ Now, Mrs Blithe,” continued the Minister, “ it’s impossible that you could suggest such a crime? ”

I was speechless; blue sterns danced before my sight, my knees trembled, and the steadfast earth grew as it were coggly aneath my chair. At last I replied—

“ That old woman, sir, is of a nature, as she is of age enough, to be a witch. She’s no canny—to even me to murder! Sir, I commit myself into your hands and judgment.”

“ Indeed I thought,” said the Minister, “ that you would never speak as Maudelin said you had done, but she told me to examine you myself, for that she was sure if you was put to the straights of a question you would tell the truth.”

“ And you have heard the truth, sir! ” cried I.

“ I believe it,” said he, “ but in addition to all she rehearsed, she told me that unless you, Mrs Blithe, would do your duty to her injured oe and free gratis for no fee

THE HOWDIE : AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

at all, she would go before a magistrate and swear you had egged her on to bathe her hands in innocent infant blood."

"Mr Stipend," cried I, "the wickedness of the human heart is beyond the computations of man. This dreadful old woman is—I'll not say what; but, oh sir, what am I to do? for if she makes a perjury to a magistrate my trade is gone and my dear bairns driven to iniquity and beggary."

Then the Minister shook his head and said, "It was to be sure a great trial for a worthy woman like me to be so squeezed in the vice of malice and malignity; but a calm sough in all troubles was true wisdom, and I ought to comply with the deceitful carlin's terms."

Thus it came to pass that after the bastard brat was born the old wife made a brag of how she had spirited the worthy Minister to terrify me. Everybody laughed at her souple trick, but to me it was for many a day a heartburning, though to the lave of the parish it was a great mean, as I have said, of daffin' and merriment.

No doubt it will be seen by the foregoing that although in a sense I had reason to be thankful that Providence, with the help of the Laird's leddy mother, had enabled me to make a bit of bread for my family, yet it was not always without a trouble and an anxiety; indeed when I think of what I have come through in my profession, though it be one of the learned and the world not able to do without it, I have often thought that I could not wish waur to my deadliest enemy than a kittle case of

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

midwifery, for surely it is a very obstetrical business and far above a woman with common talons to practise.

But it would be to make a wearisome tale were I to lengthen my story, and so I mean just to tell of another accident that happened to me last year, and then to make an end with a word or two of improvement on what shall have been said. Afterwards I will give some account of what happened to those that through my instrumentality were brought to be a credit to themselves and an ornament to the world. Some, it is very true, were not just of that stamp; for as the impartial sun shines alike on the wicked and the worthy, I have had to deal with those whose use I never could see more than that of an apple that falleth from the tree and perisheth with rottenness.

The case that I have to conclude with was in some sort mystical, and long it was before I got an interpretation thereof. It happened thus:

One morning in the fall of the year and before break of day, when I was lying wakrife in my bed, I heard a knuckling on the pane of the window and got up to inquire the cause. This was by the porter of the Thistle Inns seeking my help for a leddy at the crying, that had come to their house since midnight and could go no farther.

I made no more ado, but dressed myself offhand and went to the Inns, where to be sure there was a leddy, for anything that I then knew to the contrary, in great difficulty. Who she was and where she had come from

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I heard not, nor did I speir, nor did I see her face, for over her whole head she had a muslin apron so thrown and tied that her face was concealed and no persuasion could get her to remove that veil. It was therefore plain to me that she wished herself, even in my hands, not to be known; but she did not seem to jalouse that the very obstinacy about the veil would be a cause to make me think that she was afraid I would know her. I was not, however, overly curious, for among the other good advices that I got when I was about to take up the trade from the Leddy of Rigs, my patron, I was enjoined never to be inquisitive anent family secrets, which I have with a very scrupulous care always adhered to; and thus it happened that although the lady made herself so strange as to make me suspicious that all was not right, I said nothing, but I opened both my eyes and my ears.

She had with her an elderly woman, and before she came to the worst I could gather from their discourse that the lady's husband was expected every day from some foreign land. By and by, what with putting one thing together with another and eiking out with the help of my own imagination, I was fain to guess that she would not be ill pleased to be quit of her burden before the Major came home.

Nothing beyond this patchwork of hints then occurred. She had an easy time of it, and before the sun was up she was the mother of a bonny bairn; but what surprised me was that in less than an hour after the birth

THE HOWDIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

she was so wonderful hale and hearty that she spoke of travelling another stage in the course of the day, and of leaving Mrs Smith, that was with her, behind to take care of the baby. Indeed, this was settled; and before noon at twelve o'clock she was ready to step into the post-chaise that she had ordered to take herself forward. But mark the upshot.

When she was dressed and ready for the road—really, she was a stout woman—another chaise drew up at the Inns door, and on looking from the window to see who was in it, she gave a shriek and staggered back to a sofa, upon which she fell like one that had been dumb-founded.

In the chaise I saw only an elderly, weather-beaten gentleman, who, as soon as the horses were changed, pursued his journey. The moment he was off, this mysterious mother called the lady nurse with the baby, and they spoke for a time in whispers. Then her chaise was brought out and in she stepped, causing me to go with her for a stage. I did so, and she very liberally gave me a five-pound note of the Royal Bank, and made me, without allowing me to alight, return back with the retour chaise, for the which on my account she settled with the driver. But there the story did not rest, as I shall have occasion to rehearse by and by.

.

From the Original MS.

II

SAWNEY AT DONCASTER



SAWNEY AT DONCASTER

'**D**EED, ye see that same job o' the horse, amang the lave o' my Yorkshire exploits, is a come-to-pass well worthy of a record. For, ye should know, an it were necessar' to tell you, that I was a stranger at Leeds, and very guarded I was in my dealings, 'cause and on account o' the notour character of the Yorkshire folk for jinking in their bargains; and really whan my friend, and long correspondent there, offered, in a civil and free manner—that I must needs allow—his horse, to take me o'er to Doncaster, I swithered, and was in a sore hesitation of mind concerning the same, for I need not tell you that there's no part of the habit and repute of the Yorkshire folk more unsettled among their customers, than their ways of dealing anent horses; nay, and what's very extraordinar among honest men, they make no secret of the glamour they have used in their traffic in that commodity. Therefore, as ye may well suppose, when Mr Shalloons was so complaisant as to offer me his horse, I had a jealousy that he was not without an end for his own behoof; for which cause, and natural suspicion, ye may think I was not overly keen to comply with his obliging offer, for really, to speak God's truth, no man could be more well-bred and discreet than he was in making me that same offer. However, for all that I could either say or do, he was really so pressing with his civility, that it would have been a

SAWNEY AT DONCASTER

very coarse conduct on my part to have persisted in a denial.

Well, so ye see the horse being so proffered, and the proffer so consented to by me, on the day I had sorted out of the week I was to be there, for that aforesaid and same journey to Doncaster, the beast was brought to the door of the house where I stayed, and there having laid my legs o'er the saddle, I found it a composed and canny brute, Mr M'Lauchlan of Fuddy's fine gelding was no surer footed; and so, as ye may suppose, me and the horse, I on its back, rode our ways towards that same boroughs town of Doncaster, and the farther I rode, and the mair I grew acquaint with the horse, the mair reason I had to be thankful for the very solid politesse of my civil correspondent.

But to make a short of a long tale, and no' to descant and enlarge on the civility of the lads at the inns and taverns that we passed—indeed, for that matter, they were ower gleg for me; for, to confess a fault, they thereby wiled from me a sixpence, where I would have gart a twal-pennies do at the door of ony stabler in all Scotland. But at the time I did'na begrudge that liberality on my part, having so footy and well-going a beast for a bethank, as I had that aforesaid and the same. But I'll no' say that, now and then, when I thought of the habit and repute of the Yorkshire folk, concerning their horses, I hadna a dread upon me that all wasna sound at the bottom—the more especially as the horse lost a shoe soon after we had passed through the first toll, the

SAWNEY AT DONCASTER

which I thought a remarkable thing. However, as I was saying, the horse and me arrived safe at the aforesaid and same boroughs town of Doncaster, and no beast, after such a journey, could be in better order, than was that aforesaid and same.

But now I have to rehearse of what ensued. Ye're to know and understand, that there was then in Doncaster a grand ploy, which they call the Sen Leger, the which is a kind of a horse-race; but no like our creditable Leith races of old, and those sprees of moderation of the same sort that's ha'den in their stead at Musselburgh. Really the King's visit was just a Sabbath till't—never was seen such a jehuing o' coaches, such a splashery o' horses, and swearing and tearing o' gentlemen and flunkies; it was just a thing by common.

But no to summer and winter about yon dreadful horse races, and the gambling there anent, enough to make a sober man's hair stand on end, I alighted at the door of an inn, and I gave the horse, the same and aforesaid that had so well brought me there, to an hostler lad; and went to see what I might be able to do in the way of custom among the shops. But the wearyful Sen Leger was ahint every counter; and upon the whole it was but a thriftless journey, I soon found, that I had come upon; and therefore I came to an agreement with myself, in my own mind, to go back to Leeds, and then think of coming northward. So having in that way resolved, I went back to the inns, and told the hostler lad to have the horse, the same and aforesaid that I had

SAWNEY AT DONCASTER

come on, ready betimes in the morn, and then I returned to the house of a correspondent that had invited me to sleep, because of the extortionate state of the inns. But I know not what came ower me—surely it was a token of what was to happen—I got but little rest, and my thoughts were aye running on the poor horse, the same and aforesaid, that had brought me from Leeds, and more especially anent the repute of the Yorkshire folk as horse-cowpers.

However, at the last, I had a composed refreshment, and I rose as I had portioned, and went to the inns, and there the hostler lad, at the very minute the hour chap-pit, brought forth, as I thought, the horse. But, think what was my consternation, when going to loup on I discovered that it was nae mair Mr Shalloons' horse than I was Mr Shalloons.

“Lad,” said I, “nane of your tricks upon travellers—that’s no my horse.”

“By glum!” says he, “it be’s your horse.”

“Na,” quo’ I, “I’ll take my oath on’t, that’s no the horse I brought to this house.”

“It be’s your horse, sir, so on and be off,” said he, in a very audacious manner.

“I’ll never lay leg out o’er that beast in this world, for to a surety it’s no mine. Deil’s in the fellow, does he think what might come on me if I were catcht riding another man’s horse in Yorkshire?”

“I tells you,” quo’ the hostler, “it be your horse—I wouldn’t go never to tell no lies about it. A nice bit of

SAWNEY AT DONCASTER

blood it be too—no gen'leman need cross better. Please, sir, to mount."

"Mount!—do you think I'm by mysel, and that I dinna ken ae horse frae another?" said I: "that horse is no mine, and mine he'll never be, so gang back to the stable and bring the one I put into your hands yestreen, or I'll maybe find a way to gar you."

"Well, to be sure, if you ben't a rum ane; why, sir, does you not see that there white foot?—your horse had a white foot—which be a testificate that this here horse be's your horse."

"I tell you, white foot or black foot, that's no my horse, and if ye dinna bring my own, I'll have you afore the Sheriff."

"D——n his green breeches! I doesn't care—no, nothing at all—for Sir William Ingleby, for this be your horse; I'll tak my davy on't."

"Horse!" quo' I, "that's a mare."

"By jingo, so it be's!" was the ne'er-do-weel's answer, and I saw him laughing in his sleeve; howsoever, he had a remnant of impudence yet left, and he said, "But your horse was a mare."

At this my corruption rose, and I could stand no more, but, giving a powerful stamp, I cried, "Deevils in hell!" which was a hasty word for me to say, "d'ye think I'll tak a mare for a horse?"

So he, seeing that I was in my imperative mood, as Mr Andrew, the schoolmaster, says, put his tongue in his cheek, as I saw, and went into the house of the inns,

SAWNEY AT DONCASTER

and brought out a very civil, well-fared, gentleman-like man, the landlord, who said to me, with great contrition, that their stables being full, and some of the grooms drunk, my horse had been unfortunately hanged quite dead, and his skin gone to the tan-pit; but that, to make an indemnification, he had got one as like it as possible, and a much better than mine was; however, through inadvertancy, a mare had been brought. “ I shall not, however,” said he, “ make two words about it; your horse, I think, was worth fifty guineas—I will pay you the money.”

“ Fifty guineas!” quo’ I; “ nane o’ your fifty guineas to me; he was worth sixty pounds if he was worth a farthing.”

“ I’ll pay you the price,” said the landlord, “ and all the favour I ask in return is that you will not tell at what house the accident happened; ” so he paid me the money, but really I was for a season not easy to think of the way that such a sum for a horse had come out of a Yorkshire hand into my pouch. Howsever, as the horse was dead and gone, I could make no better o’t than to put up the notes, which I did, and came back to Leeds in a stage-coach, thinking all the way of what I should say to Mr Shalloons; and in a terrible dread I was that he would not be content with the sixty pound, but obligate me to pay a tyrannical sum.

Howsever, having considered with myself, as soon as I arrived at Leeds I went to him—aye thinking of the Yorkshire way of cheating with horses—and I said,

SAWNEY AT DONCASTER

“ Mr Shalloons, yon’s a very convenient and quiet beast of yours; would ye do a friend a favour, and sell’t to me on reasonable terms? ”

“ It is,” quo’ he, “ a very passable hack—I did not wish to part wi’t; but as you have taken a fancy to him, you shall have him for forty guineas.”

“ Forty guineas, Mr Shalloons,” cried I. “ Na, surely you could never look for that—thirty’s mair like the price.”

“ Half the difference,” said he, “ and the horse is yours.”

“ Make it punds, Mr Shalloons, and I’ll tak him,” quo’ I.

“ Well, pounds let it be,” said he—so I paid him the five-and-thirty pounds out of the sixty, by the which I had a clear profit of five-and-twenty pounds, *præter* the price of my ticket by the coach, which is an evidence and a fact to me, that a Scotchman may try his hand at horse-flesh with a Yorkshireman ony day in the year, the Sen Leger fair-day at Doncaster not excepted.

Blackwood’s Magazine, October 1823.

III

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

A CARICATURE

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

CHAPTER I

HECTOR DHU, or Black Hector of Ardenloch, was the last male of his line, and when he died his estate went to heirs-female, descendants of his grandfather, who left three daughters. One of them was married to a respectable writer to the signet in Edinburgh; we say respectable, notwithstanding his profession. Another had emigrated with a relation to New York, and had been married to an opulent farmer in the State of Vermont. The third was deemed fortunate in having married at Glasgow a Virginia tobacco-planter, whom she accompanied to that country, where she was forgotten by her relations in our time; who also could not correctly say, whether the wife of the writer to the signet or the farmer's in Vermont was the eldest.

The lady in Edinburgh had an only daughter, who in due season was married to Dr Clatterpenny, who exercised the manifold calling, trade, or profession, of druggist, surgeon, or physician, in the borough town of Clarticles.

When we knew this lady she was a widow well-stricken in years, and distinguished for the nimbleness of tongue, and the address with which she covered cunning and discernment with a veil of folly.

A long period had elapsed, during which the farmer's wife was not heard of; in fact, the good woman died in

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

giving birth to her only son, Jedediah Peabody of Mount Pisgah, in the State of Vermont, who at the time of this eventful history was a widower, and the father of a very pretty girl, who in the Yankee fashion was called Miss Octavia Margaret Peabody, which her father and other friends abridged, to save time, into the name of Tavy.

Of the Virginia planter's lady nothing whatever was known. She kept up no communication with her friends or sisters, and was as good as dead to all her cousins, when Hector Dhu departed this life.

On his death, Dr Drone, the minister of the parish, caused inquiry to be made respecting the heirs to his estate, and Mr Peabody and Mrs Clatterpenny came forward, of course.

Some doubts of her right lay always on the mind of that lady, when she received a letter from a son whom she had walking the hospitals in London, informing her that Mr Peabody had arrived in the British metropolis by one of the New York packet ships with his daughter, an uncommonly beautiful young lady; and he gave his mother a gentle hint, that probably it would save much expense, and keep the fortune in the house, if he could make himself agreeable to Miss Octavia; "but," he added, "I fear she intends to throw herself away upon a young man from Virginia, with whom she has lately become acquainted, and who is in town on his return to the United States, from a tour that he has been making in some of the most interesting parts of Europe."

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

As soon as Mrs Clatterpenny received this letter, she acted with her usual discretion and decision. At this time she resided in the old town of Edinburgh, in a close celebrated as a receptacle for the widows of the Faculty, and the relicts, as the Scotch call the surviving wives, of divines.

Among other acquaintances whom Mrs Clatterpenny knew in Edinburgh, was a Mr Threeper, a member of the Scotch Bar, who, like the generality of his brethren, having little to do with briefs or business, was exceedingly amusing to old women. Upon the instant, our heroine determined that she would see if she could make a cheap bargain for his services and advice in the matter she had to agitate with her kinsman, Mr Peabody. In this she shewed her wonted acumen; for, after having disclosed to Mr Threeper her pretensions to the Ardenlochie property, she persuaded him not only to take her case in hand, but to accompany her to London; in fact, to go shares with her in the adventure, and to agree for payment, that he should be content either with the half of the estate, if he made good her claims to it; or the same reward, if her son, in any way by his advice, married the daughter of Mr Peabody.

Accordingly, an agreement between them to this effect was formally drawn up, and they proceeded together in the steam-boat called the "United Kingdom," from Leith to London.

They had, among other fellow-passengers, a Mr Archibald Shortridge, junior, a young man from Glasgow.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

He was a good-natured fellow, rather fattish, and his father had been some years ago Lord Provost of that royal city, which, by the bye, this young man was at great pains to let strangers know. But though there was a little weakness in this, he was a very passable character, as men go in the world, and not overly nice in his feelings. He had been bred up in the notion, that gold is the chief good in the world, and that they are great fools who think otherwise.

We should mention a striking characteristic of him—a way of standing very imposingly with his legs apart, like the Colossus of Rhodes, with his head back, and his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat. In this posture he was really a very prognosticative figure. Many took him for a member of the town-council before he was elected into that venerable body, and it was clearly seen that he was ordained to be a bailie. Some went so far as to say, that they saw the signs of Lord Provost about him; at all events, it was the universal opinion of those that knew him, that Mr Shortridge was not come to his kingdom.

It happened odd enough, that old Provost Shortridge, his father, and Mr Peabody, had some correspondence together, in which the Provost, a long forecasting man, having some notion of Peabody's relationship to Hector Dhu, a confirmed bachelor, jocularly, in a postscript to one of his letters, invited Peabody to come with his daughter to Glasgow, offering to introduce them to their Highland relation.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

Peabody at the time declined the invitation, but, from less to more, the subject being once introduced into their correspondence respecting staves and lumber, it was in the end pactioned between them, that Archie (as he was called in those days), our acquaintance, was proposed for Miss Octavia Margaret; and, in consequence, when that young lady was heard to have arrived in London, the aforesaid Archie, or, as he was now called, Archibald, junior, was advised by his wily father to go and push his fortune, by the "United Kingdom," with the young lady.

Thus it came to pass, that the "United Kingdom" was enriched with all these of our dramatis personæ, in addition to the usual clanjamphry that constitute the cargoes of the steamers that ply between Leith and London.

It happened, however, that the passage was rough and squally, which, Mrs Clatterpenny, in complaining of her sickness, assured her companions made her a sore nymph. Mr Threeper was speechless, and lay all day in his bed, crying "Oh! oh!" as often as the steward addressed him; but Mr Shortridge, in all the perils of the voyage, was as gay as a lark, and as thirsty as a duck; for he had been on a voyage of pleasure, like most young men of the Trongate, to the Craig of Ailsa, where he feasted on solan geese, by which, as he said himself, he was inured to seafaring; but his appetite was none improved.

When the vessel reached her moorings in the Thames,

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

they somehow got into a hackney-coach together—perhaps there was a little political economy in this—and they took up their abode, on the recommendation of Mr Threeper, at the Talbot Inn, in the Borough. “It has been many hundred years,” said he, “a very celebrated house. Chaucer the poet speaks of it in his time, and the Pilgrims for Canterbury he represents as taking their departure therefrom. An inn, tavern, or hotel, to have been much frequented for several hundred years, speaks well for its accommodation; it must have adapted itself in a very extraordinary manner to the various changes of society.”

CHAPTER II

Our travellers being arrived at the inn, Mr Shortridge had some doubt, from its appearance, if it were exactly the place which, from the inferences of Mr Threeper, he had been led to expect; but he submitted to his fate, and the luggage which they had brought with them in the hackney-coach was unloaded. While waiting for Mrs Clatterpenny, who had some orders to give at the bar, he fell into conversation with the advocate, in which he inquired if there was any truth in the report, that their fellow-passenger, Mrs Clatterpenny, was heiress to the great Ardenlochie estates.

“Yes,” replied Mr Threeper, “if no nearer relative can be found.”

“Your news,” said Mr Shortridge, “surprises me. I

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

have heard my father say, when he was the Lord Provost of Glasgow, that an old acquaintance of our house in Vermont was the heir; but between ourselves, Mr Threeper, how could you allow that old woman to come with you? Thank fortune we are on shore; I could not have endured her intolerable clack much longer."

"Ay," said Mr Threeper, "the hoarse waves are musical compared to her tongue; but I could not do well without her; and to let you into the truth, the random nonsense she is ever talking, is a cloak which conceals both shrewdness and cunning, moreover, she has a son in London, between whom and her relation, Peabody's daughter, just arrived from America, she is desirous to effect a marriage, to avoid litigation; for there is a doubt arising from Mr Peabody's claim to the^s property, as heir-at-law."

"Peabody! did you say Peabody? "

"Yes," replied Mr Threeper; "we have heard that the same cause has brought him across the Atlantic."

Mr Shortridge looked very much astonished at this, and added, with an accent of great wonder, "Do you know, that it was arranged between my father and this very Peabody, that I should go to America and court his daughter. Between us, the Provost had an eye, I suspect, to these very Ardenlochie estates. But what says young Clatterpenny to this match of his mother's making? "

Mr Threeper was neither sharp, adroit, nor intelligent, and of course this declaration of young Shortridge made

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

no right impression upon him, and he replied, " We anticipate no difficulty with the young man. He has written to his mother, that the lady is a divinity, and he has himself proposed the match, to which I have lent my advice."

Mr Shortridge said nothing to this, but rubbing his mouth with his hand, muttered, " I'm glad to hear that though, for I would not like to marry a fright."

This was not overheard by Mr Threeper, who, forgetful of his professional prudence, added, " It is feared, however, that she will throw herself away on one Tompkins, a young Virginian, who is now in London."

" Tompkins! " cried Mr Shortridge; " I know him well; he was in Glasgow, and took a beeper with us when my father was the Lord Provost."

" There is no doubt," said Threeper, " that it is the same, for he has been making the tour of Europe. What sort of a person is he? "

" Not unlike myself," replied Mr Shortridge; " rather genteelish."

" The likeness," cried Threeper, " cannot be striking; but hush, here comes Mrs Clatterpenny reprimanding the negro waiter, who, by the bye, is the first of the kind that I have ever seen."

In saying this, the two gentlemen stepped more apart, and Mrs Clatterpenny entered in great tribulation, speaking behind her to the waiter, who had not, she thought, been so attentive to her commands as he ought.

" Black lad," said she, " I say black lad! what for have

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

ye no taken my bits o' boxes up to the bed-chamber? I tell you to take them up in a gay time." Then turning round and observing the gentlemen, she addressed them, " Eh! gentlemen, little did I hope for the pleasantrie of seeing you here; and glad am I, Mr Threeper, that ye are not out of the way, for I am almost driven demented. The misleared blackamoor does not know a word I say—It's a dreadful thing that folk in London town will no speak the English language. Oh, Mr Shortridge, is na this a town!—it's not like our own ancient borough towns, that were finished afore the rexes were kings, and have not had a new building in them since."

" Yes," replied Shortridge, " folks say that some of them would be none the worse of being mended."

" Oh, Mr Shortridge," cried the lady, " it's no possible that you, the gett of a Lord Provost, can be a reformer; but Glasgow, I will allow, would be none the worse of a reformation; 'deed, Mr Shortridge, we would all be the better of a reformation, and ye shouldna laugh in your sleeve at my moralizing."

Shortridge, who had a salutary dread of the old woman's tongue, replied, to change the conversation, that he was only thinking of their sufferings in the voyage.

" Aye," said she, " that's to be held in remembrance; oh, that dismal night, when the wind was roaring like a cotton-mill, and the captain was swearing as if he had been the Prince of the Powers of the Air! ' I'll never forget it. You and me were like the two innocent babes in the wood, and obligated to sleep on the floor, with only a

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

rag of a sail fastened with a gimlet and a fork, for a partition between us; but, Mr Shortridge, ye're a discreet young man—nay, ye needna turn your head away and think shame, for no young gentleman could behave to a lady in a more satisfactory manner."

Shortridge was a good deal nettled at this speech, and turning on his heel, said, rather huffily, " It's all an invention."

" Well, well," replied Mrs Clatterpenny, " but you'll never deny that we were objects of pity. There was yourself, Mr Threeper," turning towards the advocate, " a man learned in the law, and all manner of knowledge known to the Greeks, what a sight were ye? the whale swallowing Jonah was as mim as a May puddock compared to you; and, Mr Shortridge, ye had a sore time o't."

" Nay, nay," exclaimed Shortridge, " my dear madam, I was not at all ill, only a tiff off the Bass."

" A tiff! " cried Mrs Clatterpenny; " do ye no mind what Robin Burns says?—

‘ Oh that some power the gift would gie us,
To see ourselves as others see us.’

But I'll tell ye what ye were like, if ye'll show me a man vomiting a devil, and his name Legion; however, we have all our infirmities, and I want at this present time to confabulate with Mr Threeper on a matter of instant business, so ye must leave us."

" Mr Threeper," continued she, after the Glasgow beau had disappeared, " Mr Threeper, that Mr Shortridge is

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

no an overly sensible lad, so I hope ye have not let him into the catastrophies of our business; for I will be as plain as I am pleasant with you; in short, Mr Threeper, since we came together in the same vessel, I think ye're a wee leaky, and given to make causeway talk of sealed secrets; and surely ye'll never tell me that this is a fit house to bring a woman of character to."

"I acknowledge," said he, "that it is not quite what I expected; it's more like women than wine—it has not improved with age."

"Mr Threeper," said the old lady, "do you mean that as a fling at me? ye have a stock of impudence to do so, but it's all the stock in trade that many lawyers are possessed of; however, it may do for a night's lodging, but I give you fair warning, that though it's a good house enough for you, as you said before you saw it, it will never do for the likes o' me. But what I wanted to consult you about in a professional way, is a matter that calls for all your talent; I told a blackamoor man, do you hear me? and telling a blackamoor man to seek for my cousin, Peabody, ye see"—

"Well, I do see," replied Mr Threeper.

"You do see! is that all the law you have to give me? but I have not told you the particulars; he's never come back yet, think of that and weep; he's like the raven, Mr Threeper, that Noah sent out of the ark; vagabond bird, it was black too, ye know."

"What then? "

"What then, Mr Threeper, is that all the opinion of

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

counsel that ye have to offer to a lanerly widow in London town, sorrowing like a pelican in the wilderness? ”

Poor Mr Threeper knew not what to say; experience had taught him that his client was driving towards some other object, while pretending that she was consulting him. Fortunately, however, at this moment a bustle was heard, and on looking towards the occasion, they beheld an odd figure entering the house; an elderly person, who wore a broad-brimmed straw-hat, turned up behind, somewhat ecclesiastical, with a crape tied round it in a very dishevelled manner. He had no neck-cloth, but the collar of his shirt was fastened by a black ribband, and he wore a bottle-green great-coat, with large buttons, one of which, on the haunches, was missing; his waistcoat was home-made swansdown, of large broad stripes, and he had on corduroy trowsers, with his shoes down in the heel, and a cigar in his mouth, while his hands were busily employed with a knife and stick, which he was indefatigably making nothing of.

“ Who is this? ” cried Mrs Clatterpenny; “ what’na curiosity is this? Yankee Doodle himself is, compared to this man, a perfect composity; oh, sirs, but he must be troubled with sore eyes, for he wears blue specks, and they’re of the nose-nipping kind.”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

CHAPTER III

By the time our heroine had examined this phenomenon, he had made his way through coaches, carts, crates, trunks, and band-boxes, to the place where she was standing talking to Mr Threeper.

“ Well,” said the stranger, “ I guess if you ben’t some of them ’ere folks what have come’d by the steam-boat from Scotland state.”

“ ’Deed, sir,” replied Mrs Clatterpenny, “ it’s no a guess, but a true say; we are just even now come, and a’ in confusion as yet.”

The stranger then turned round to Mr Threeper and said, “ I, squire, expect you have brought a right rare cargo of novelties.”

Mr Threeper replied in the best style of the Parliament House in the Modern Athens; perhaps we ought to call it, for the same reason that the inhabitants have changed the name of the town—the Areopagus.

“ No, sir, none whatever; every thing is going right, the reformers have all their own way.”

“ Well, I reckon,” continued the odd apparition, “ that be pretty particular, for I can tell you that we have here in London a considerable some; we hear that the Emperor of Rushy has had an audience of the Great Mogul, and therefore I guess we shall have a Dutch war.”

“ Oh, Mr Threeper,” exclaimed Mrs Clatterpenny, “ sic a constipation that will be! ”

“ And pray, Mister,” said the strange-looking man,

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ what be she called, that ’ere ship what brought you to this ’ere place? ”

“ The ‘ United Kingdom,’ ” replied Mr Threeper.

But the foreigner, none daunted, continued, “ She’ll be a spacious clever floater, I guess; and I say, old lady, didn’t you hear naught in that ’ere voyage of one Mrs Clatterpenny, one of my relations in Scotland State.”

“ The gude preserve us! ” cried the lady; “ is na that delightful? am not I Mrs Clatterpenny mysel’, and is not this Mr Threeper, my man of business, a most judicial man? ”

“ Well, I reckon as how I do be Jedediah Peabody of Mount Pisgah, State of Vermont; folks call me Squire, but I an’t myself so ’dacious.”

“ Oh, Mr Peabody, my cousin, but I am most happy to see you looking so well; but ye have lost Mrs Peabody, worthy lady; she was a loss, Mr Peabody! ”

“ Yes,” said he, “ rest her soul, poor creature she was an almighty ambitious woman; she would have her kitchen as spanking as our parlour.”

“ Aye, aye,” continued Mrs Clatterpenny, in the most sympathetic manner possible, “ that shewed she was the bee that made the honey; ye see I speak to you with the cordiality of an old friend—and how is your lovely daughter? ”

“ Well,” replied the Vermont farmer; “ I reckon our Tavy be right well, for she’s gone a sparking with that ’ere young Tompkins what comes from Virginy to see the lions; they are main dreadful creturs.”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

Mrs Clatterpenny was greatly struck at this intelligence, and cried, " I wonder you, a man of discretion, would let her do the like of that; she can do far better, and, Mr Peabody, let me tell you, keep the gear among us"

Mr Threeper, who overheard her, whispered, " Softly, ma'am, softly, cast not your line too fast." But she disregarded the admonition, and continued, " Had it been wi' our Johnny, her ain cousin, it would hae been a more comely thing."

Mr Threeper prudently twitched her gown at this—" I beseech you, be on your guard."

" I wish, Mr Threeper," said she tartly, " that ye would behave yourself, and no be pouking at my tail."

Mrs Clatterpenny at the same time observing that Peabody was looking round the court of the inn, in not the most satisfied manner, added, " 'Deed it's not a perfect paradise, but it's some place that Mr Threeper read of in a story-book, only they forgot to mention that inidden; however, I'll no be long here; indeed I have a great mind to quit it on the instant, and I will; and how are we to get our trunks carried to a Christian place? "

" Christian place," said the porter, " Christian place! I don't know any such place, I was never there."

While she was bustling about the inn-yard, Mr Threeper politely informed Mr Peabody that they had come to the Talbot, entirely owing to a misconception which they had made in the reading of Chaucer.

" Chaucer!" said Peabody, " did he keep tavern here?"

Mr Threeper looked at the American, and snuffing, as

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

it were a fetid smell, turned upon his heel, and went towards Mrs Clatterpenny, who by this time was frying with vexation at not being able to make herself understood by the servants; however, in the end, a hackney-coach was procured, their luggage reloaded, and with glee and comfort seated beside her cousin, off the vehicle drove for the west end of the town.

In going along, the old gentleman mentioned that he had committed a similar mistake, in thinking the stage-coach inn, in which he had come with his daughter to London, was a proper place to stay at; but on the representation of Mr Tomkins, they had removed soon after to a lodging-house in Spring Gardens; and as Mr Threeper spoke of going to Fludyer Street, he proposed that they should take Spring Gardens in their way, that he might shew his kinswoman the house. This was deemed a happy thought, and accordingly they went round that way, and he pointed out to his lodging, and looking up, saw his daughter with Tompkins at a window.

“ Hey,” cried he, “ what do I see? our Tavy in a secrecy with that ’ere Virginy chap, Tompkins.”

Mrs Clatterpenny also looked up, and exclaimed, “ Megsty me! ” To which Peabody, taking the cigar from his lips and spitting deliberately, said, “ Now, for our daughter Tavy to contract herself with a young man, snapping her fingers at her father——” Mrs Clatterpenny finished the sentence, and cried, “ Oh, the cutty, has she done the like of that? ” But Peabody exclaimed, “ I’ll spoil their rigg, or my baptismal name is

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

written in an oyster shell." With that he alighted from the coach, and hastened into the house; and as fast as his down-the-heeled shoes enabled him, he went to the room where he saw the lovers standing. Mrs Clatterpenny, turning towards Mr Threeper, sagaciously observed, as the carriage drove off—

"He's in the afflictions, Mr Threeper; but this is just what Mrs Widow Carlin warned me of from a letter she had from her grandson in New York; he wrote, that when young folks there make a purpose of marriage, instead of publishing the banns in a godly manner in the kirk, they make a show of themselves, arm-in-arm cleecket, up and down Broadway Street. Talk of irregular marriages! a hey cock-a-lorum to Gretna Green is holy wedlock compared to sic chambering and wantoning."

Mr Threeper looked very grave at this, and said, "Chambering it cannot strictly be called, for the window was open, and we all saw what took place."

"That's very true," said Mrs Clatterpenny, "the observe shews that ye're a man distinct in the law; but for a young lady of good connexions to lay hold of her lover is highway robbery. It was bad enough amang our ain well-disposed folk at home to see a lad and a lass slipping and slinking afar off from one another, the lassie biting a straw, going to a corner in the evening. But that, Mr Threeper, was only among the lower orders; the genteeler sort divert themselves in flower gardens, with making love among the roses, as that sweet, sweet wee man, Mr Moore, in a ballad rehearses, as no doubt ye

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

well know. But what will this world come to at last! for I weel mind, when my dear deceased Doctor made love to me, that he never got a word of sense out of my mouth till I saw that he was in earnest."

In the meantime, Peabody was mounting the stairs as fast as he was able, with wrathful energy; but before he reached the room, his daughter inquired at Mr Tompkins, as a continuance of their discourse, if he knew Mr Archibald Shortridge, junior.

" Oh yes," replied the Virginian, " my friend Colonel Cyril Thornton gave me an introduction to his father, the Lord Provost of Glasgow; he is related, I believe, to the Colonel."

" Indeed! " said the young lady; " I'm glad of that, for the Colonel is a nice man, except in writing his own life, which gentlemen never do."

Tompkins replied a little gravely, that he could not see why his relationship to the Colonel should make her so happy.

But she answered gaily, " You know one would not like to have a booby for a lover."

" A lover, Octavia! "

" Father says so, and I am a dutiful child."

" Pshaw! " cried Tompkins, " this is more wayward than the favour you affect to that ninny, Clatterpenny; " and he swung to the other side of the room.

The young lady looked after him at this antic caper, and inquired archly if she had ever given Clatterpenny more encouragement than his merits deserved.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ Merits! what merits? ” cried Tompkins, turning fiercely round, and coming up to her.

“ Why,” said she, “ the merit of being heir to a great estate in Scotland; is not that a charm to win favour for him in any young lady’s eye? ”

At this moment the old gentleman shuffled into the room, holding his cigar in one hand and his staff uplifted in the other, crying, “ Sheer off, Squire Tompkins; and come hither, daughter Tavy; ” upon which the young lady, as an obedient child, obeyed the summons, and the Virginian lingeringly walked towards the door.

“ I’m sure, father,” said Miss Octavia, “ you need not be afraid of Tompkins; have you not seen the partiality of my heart for my dear kinsman, Clatterpenny? ”

Tompkins smote his forehead at this speech, and cried, “ Oh! the devil.”

“ Well,” said Peabody, “ but I expect I have promised you to young squire Shortridge, bekase, you see, his father and I are main gracious by way of letters; however, you know, Tavy, I ain’t a-going to trade you, or make a nigger slave of your affections.”

“ But,” inquired Miss, “ is he heir to such an estate in the Highlands of Scotland? ”

“ Oh! mercenary woman,” cried Tompkins; and Peabody answered, “ Well, I’ll tell you something. I guess that ’ere estate ben’t surely his, for I here have in my pocket these few lines concerning the Old Scotch Indian Chief what was our relation—what call you him, Tavy? ”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

The young lady, rather somewhat gravely, replied, "that his name was Hector Dhu of Ardenlochie."

"Well," said the father, "these two lines tell me what we did not know, and says he has kicked the bucket; which, if so be, and the news ain't erroneous, it adds that we be his inheritors, and not cousin Clatterpenny."

Tompkins at this rushed forward and cried, "Did you say Hector Dhu of Ardenlochie was dead?"

"I guess so," replied Peabody; "and it ben't below the fact; but I say, squire, we have business; so you clear out. This way, Tavy;" and the old gentleman preceded his daughter into another room, leaving Tompkins alone; and astonished at what he had heard, soon after he broke out into the following soliloquy:—

"In my mother's tales of her ancestors," said he, "she has often told me that when Hector Dhu of Ardenlochie died, his estate ought to be mine; for that she was the child of an elder daughter than the mothers of the Clatterpennys, or the Peabodys. If there be any truth in the traditions of my mother, these news deserve investigation, and luckily I took her papers to Scotland to examine into the affair; but I was told then that Hector Dhu was a stout old bachelor, and might live so many years, that I never thought even of opening the bundles at Edinburgh."

At this juncture, he alertly left the room.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

CHAPTER IV

It was certainly a very extraordinary thing that all those who were interested in the Ardenlochie inheritance should meet together in the way we have described, in the Talbot inn in Southwark. Had a novelist or a dramatic writer been guilty of so improbable an incident, he would have been scouted in the most nefarious manner; but there is no miracle more wonderful than truth, and this surprising incident is related by us with as much brevity as is consistent with perspicuity.

It is true, that before the day was done, Mr Archibald Shortridge, junior, shifted his quarters to the London Coffee-House, in Ludgate Hill, much renowned for its hospitable reception of Glasgow citizens, and other denizens from the west of Scotland.

Mr Threeper, before the sun was set, and it set early, induced the old lady, as we have related, to pitch her tent in Fludyer Street, Westminster; while he deemed it becoming his professional eminence to take up his abode in an excellent hotel, which we at this moment forget the name of, but it is a house greatly frequented by those who are called in vulgar parlance, the claws of Edinburgh—to say nothing of those myriads of bailies, deputies, and other clanjamphry, who fancy that they have business before Parliament, when it happens that some schemer tells them a road, bridge, or railway, merits the attention of the collective wisdom of such a nest of sapients as a town council.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

The party being thus broken up, there was something attractive in the influence of each, and in consequence they were, though living apart, frequently together.

In the meantime, Mrs Clatterpenny had scarcely removed into her new lodgings, when she chanced to recollect that her son, Johnny, who was walking the hospitals, had not yet paid his duty to her. It is true that her faculties were so much occupied with strange matters, that she had never thought of him at all; but when she did call to mind that he was in the same town with her, and had never come to see her, she was truly an afflicted woman. She rung for the servant-maid of the house, and, with accents that would have pierced a heart of stone, erranded the damsel to bring to her immediately her precious darling.

The maid being fresh from the country, repeated the commands that had been given to her as well as she could to her mistress, but her mistress averred that she knew not such a person as Mr Johnny residing in all the street. At last the old lady recollected that he lived in Tooty Street, in the Borough, and she contrived at a late hour to make that known. But no Johnny was forthcoming that night, and his anxious mother never closed her eyes, thinking that he perhaps had caught a mortal malady in Guy's Hospital, and greatly lay in need of her blandishments. When this thought had got possession of her brain, which it was not allowed to do till the night was far advanced, and she had pressed her pillow, she was not long till she ascertained even the name of his distemper.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

"Goodness me!" said she, "what if it's the cholera, and that I have just come to this sinful city to lay his head in the grave; but if it is the cholera, surely the doctors would never let me do that." And then having tormented herself with this cogitation, a ray broke in upon her benighted brain; and among other things which she conjured up for her comfort, she remembered that Johnny had written to her a letter, in which he had told her that cholera patients were not received into the hospital which he was attending. In short, Mrs Clatterpenny never knew what it was to let down her eyelids all that night. Her peace was also disturbed by a policeman walking beneath her window; as often as she heard his foot fall on the stones she covered her head, lay trembling, and concluded that he could be nothing less than a London housebreaker. By and bye, however, the dawn began to dapple the east, and betimes she arose, thinking of her Johnny and of the man walking in the street. At last she heard her landlady stirring, and she rose to disclose to her the jeopardy that she had discovered them all to have been in; but it was some time before she proved to the satisfaction of the innocent landlady that the policeman was a thief, though she had no doubt upon the subject herself.

"But," said she, "if he had not an ill turn to do, what for was he going up and down at the dead hour of night, and looking in at the seams of the windows wherever he saw a light within? That's volumous! And if I thought that Mr Threeper was rightly versed in the jookries of

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

the law, I would go home and leave him to knit the ravelled skein himself; but I have seen, since I brought him with me, that he has not a spur in his head, and I maun stay to keep him right. I would advise every one that may be brought into my situation to make no covenant with a man of the law till he has been proven in a steam-vessel."

At this moment Mr Threeper, as the day was now advanced, came into her parlour, and sent up word that he was there waiting to take breakfast with her. She took this, in her forlorn estate, very kind of him, little thinking that he thereby would save the price of his breakfast at the hotel, which he intended to charge in his account, and at the same time make a judicious application to her teapot.

However, she made haste downstairs, and was right well pleased with her visitor.

"This is," said she to him, "very discreet of you to come in such a friendly manner to see me, for really I am no out of the need of friendship. All night I could think of nothing but our Johnny that's at his studies in the hospital here, and a dreadful apparition walking the streets, girding his thoughts for guilt. At times, Mr Threeper, I could not forget yon Peabodys; the old man is just a fright, but his daughter is weel-fairt; and if our Johnny can make a conquest of her tender affections, she'll not make an ill match."

"It will be a judicious union," replied Mr Threeper, "for then the doubt that you have, whether your mo-

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

ther or Mr Peabody's was the *elder* daughter of old Ardenlochie, will be got over in a very satisfactory manner."

"I've been thinking so too," replied Mrs Clatterpenny, "but I do not approve of yon curdooing with the lad Tompkins; and I'm just out of the body till I see our Johnny, to give him counsel how to behave in such a jeopardy; for Johnny, I needna tell you, is a very sightly young man, though ye'll say that the craw aye thinks its own bird the whitest. Howsomever, Mr Threeper, I'm no a woman given to such vanities; only, it would be the height of injustice if I were to deny, that for my taste, were I a wanter on the eve of a purpose of marriage, I would make our Johnny my option instead of the lad from Virginy—but every one to her own liking."

During this conversation, Mr Threeper was laying in his breakfast; plate of toast after plate had disappeared, till the paucity of materials attracted the attention of Mrs Clatterpenny, insomuch that she could not help remarking, it was well seen the Englishers were a starveling nation, and did not know the comforts of a good breakfast, though they pretended to have a nostril for roast beef at their dinner.

"And it's very plain, Mr Threeper, that they have but a scrimpit notion, after all, of good living. Oh, Mr Threeper, if ye had seen what I have seen of a Highland breakfast, your mouth would water. When I was a young lady in my teens, before I was married to my dear deceased doctor, I paid a visit to Hector Dhu, and ye

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

would have seen, had ye been in his house then, what a breakfast should be. We had, in the first place, I remember well, though there was just him and me, a plateful of eggs as big as a stack of peats; a mutton ham, boiled whole; a cold hen, left from the dinner the day before, just wanting a wing; four rizzart haddocks, every one of them as big as a wee whale; six farles of crump-cake; three penny loaves—they were a little mouldy, but ye're to expect that in the Highlands;—and a plate of toasted bread that it would have ta'en a man of learning to count the slices. That was a breakfast! besides tea and coffee. To be sure the coffee was not very good, and ye might have said, without the breach of truth, that the servant had forgotten to put in the beans; but it was something, I trow, different from the starvation of toom plates such as we see here. Do ye know, Mr Threeper, that ye have been so busy in taking your share, seeing there was so little, that ye forgot me altogether? I haven't had devil-be-licket of all the bread that was brought into the room."

At this moment Johnny entered the apartment;—but we must defer to another chapter what passed on that occasion.

CHAPTER V

Dr Johnny, as young Clatterpenny was called among his companions, had not the talents of his mother. He took more after what his father had been; namely, he was above mediocrity in his appearance, stood on excel-

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

lent terms with himself, and though it could not be said that he was a young man of ability, he had address enough, with a consequential air, to make himself pass, with a certain class of old women, as one of that description.

His mother was all interjections and fondness at the sight of her son, who had come to breakfast, and, to the great gratification of Mr Threeper, she was not long of making this intention known to the servant of the house; recommending, at the same time, to the astonished menial, to prepare something better than a shaving of bread, for Scotland was not a land of famine.

While the new breakfast was preparing, divers interlocutors were delivered by each of the several parties; and before the tray was served a second time, Dr Johnny understood on what footing Mr Threeper had accompanied his mother. "But," said the old lady, "our chief dependence, Johnny, is on you; for although it cannot be doubted that Mr Peabody and me are either of us the true heir, it would save a great fasherie at law if ye would draw up with his daughter, whom I must say has a comely face, and her likeness is not in every draw-well that a Joe Janet keeks into."

Johnny acknowledged the superiority of the young lady, but expressed some fear that Tompkins had already engaged her affections.

"Not that I," said he, "care much about that, for a woman brought up in the woods, no doubt, snaps at the first gentleman that says a civil word to her."

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ Yes,” interposed Mr Threeper, “ inexperience is easily beguiled.”

“ That,” said Mrs Clatterpenny, “ is the next bore to what I said, when my dear deceased husband, the doctor, and his father, made up to me. Heigh, sirs, many changes have happened in the world since then! I was very different from what I’m now; for I was then very well looked, and Mr M’Causlin, the merchant, that had a shop in the South Bridge, often and often said sae. But fate’s fate; I was ordained to throw myself away on the doctor. Ah, but with all his faults, he was a man that had a way of his own; and when he went out in the morning, his shoes were like black satin, and the ring on his finger was a carbuncle of great price. Mr Threeper, he was a learned man likewise, and told me that castor oil comes from America; but cousins are worse than castor oil. And he was a jocose man, and had the skin of a crocodile hanging in the shop, which he used to call our humbug.

“ ‘ Dear Doctor,’ quo’ I one day to him, ‘ surely they were giants in those days, when such like bugs bit their backs ’—which made him laugh so loud and long that he terrified me, lest it was not in his power to stop. But, poor man, everything under the sun is ordained to have an end, as well as his guffaw.”

The advocate having by this time quenched his hunger, could partake, as he said himself, “ of nothing further of the toast and tea,” sliddered back his chair from the breakfast table, and with a grave professional air,

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

told Dr Johnny, that it was not idle talk that his mother uttered, when she recommended him to cast a sheep's eye at Miss Octavia.

"After," said he, "the gravest consideration that I have been able to bestow on this very difficult case, I have come to a conclusion, that we ought not to go to law if we can make a marriage between you and Mr Peabody's only daughter. Therefore, you see, sir, that much depends upon you; and I am of opinion that it is a very fortunate thing the young lady is so gracefully endowed."

"That's a very connect speech," said Mrs Clatterpenny; "and, Johnny, my dear, what have you got to gainsay such powerful argolling?"

The young doctor, after duly considering what he had heard, answered: "I will make no rash promises. Miss Peabody is certainly a very eligible match for me in my present state; but if my mother is the heiress, why should I think of marrying her at all? I ought to look to a little better."

"That's very discreet of you," said Mrs Clatterpenny, "if I were the true heir; but if Peabody comes in before me, what do ye say to that?"

"Ah," replied Johnny, "the case is different, for then Miss would be most desirable. Mr Threeper, is there any doubt of that?"

"None," said the lawyer, "none in my opinion; but if we are to go into court with the question, there may be objections raised; and in the present aspect of all

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

things, I would advise you to cherish kindly inclination towards the young lady."

"I would advise you too," said his mother, "for possession is nine points of the law, and there's no telling what airt the wind blows when there's a gale in the Parliament House."

"I will think of what you have advised, Mr Threeper," said Doctor Johnny.

"Well, I'm glad to hear that," said his mother, "and let no grass grow beneath your feet till ye have paid your respects to the lady this morning in their new lodgings, No. 110, in Spring Gardens; a very creditable place, as I understand. And if ye make haste, ye'll be there before that upsetting young man from Virginy, that they call Mr——houselicat."

Nothing particular at that time took place after this admonition. Doctor Johnny took his leave for the purpose of doing what his mother advised; and while he was on the road through the Park to Spring Gardens, Mr Peabody and his daughter were sitting after breakfast discoursing at their ease, respecting Mrs Clatterpenny and her pretensions.

"What could have brought the old lady," said Miss Octavia, "to meet us in London?"

"I don't know," answered her father; "I guess it might be the ship. But if so be that we ain't the inheritors of that 'ere old Scotch Indian chief's location, you may make a better speck of yourself."

"Oh, heavens!" cried the young lady.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ Why, Tavy, you see here,” said the old gentleman, “ how the cat jumps; you know what a dead everlasting certainty it is to lose property in them ’ere doubts of law.”

“ But,” said the simple maiden, “ consider my regard for Cousin Clatterpenny.”

“ I have been,” said the old gentleman, “ a-making my calculations ’bout it, so will be no more a stump in the way, bekase of them ’ere doubts. Oh, Tavy, what be the matter? I guess if she ain’t besoomed right away. Help! help!”

At this instant Doctor Johnny made his appearance, and joined in the confusion; but before the lovesick Miss was recovered, the porter from the inn had brought a letter for Mr Peabody, which had come by the post that morning, with a superscription to be delivered immediately. The old man having got his daughter upright, left her in the hands of Doctor Johnny; and going to a window, read the letter to himself very quietly. But though he made no exclamation, the contents evidently gave him pleasure, and he put the letter folded up again into his waistcoat pocket, and returned towards the afflicted damsel.

The conversation, in the meantime, between Doctor Johnny and Miss Octavia, shewed him that he had no hope in that quarter. She was a sharp and shrewd observer, and saw that she had not that measure of accomplishments and beauty which would obtain the ascendancy in his breast, and therefore was not long of

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

convincing him that he had nothing to hope for. Indeed there was ill luck in the time of his application, and she felt that she had too long dissembled. Accordingly, she determined to do so no more, and she made short work with the Doctor, soon giving him his dismissal, to which he had no time to reply, when Mrs Clatterpenny and Mr Threeper came in; the lady saying to Mr Peabody as she entered, without observing the condition of Miss Octavia, "Is't really true, Mr Peabody, that in America the advocates and lords of session sit in judgment amang you wanting wigs and gowns? For my part, if I am to pay for law, I wouldna think I gat justice if the advocates and the fifteen hadna wigs nor gowns; I would always like to get all that pertains to a whole suit if I paid for one."

Mr Peabody made no reply to this speech, but touching his forehead significantly, said, "Is she?"

Mr Threeper was taken a little aback, and answered rather rashly, "Sometimes."

Presently, however, he added, "when necessary." Mrs Clatterpenny, very quick in her observations, observed the gestures of her kinsman, and said aside to her man of business, "Have I given him a suspect of my composety?" and then added, "I'll leave you to sift him, and be sure ye find out all the favourable outs and ins of my anxiety."

"Cousin Peabody," she rejoined aloud, "I'll just step oure and see my sweet friend Miss Octavia. She's a fine creature; and I'm just like my dear deceased hus-

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

band, who was very fond of Octavos—indeed he was very fond of them. And, oh, but he was a jocose man; for one day, when I was wearying by myself, seeing him sae taken up with one of his Octavos, and saying, Oh that I were a book instead of a wife, ‘ I would not object,’ said he, ‘ if ye were an almanack; that I might get a new one every year.’ ”

With these words she went across the room to Doctor Johnny; and the young lady, who, now recovered, was sitting talking to him on a sofa, and Peabody with Mr Threeper continued their confabulation near the door of the room.

“ I calculate,” said the Vermont farmer, touching his forehead, “ that the old ladye be quite ’roneous.”

“ Your remark is perfectly just; but she is not altogether *fatuous*, for in that case she could not have persuaded me to come with her, though she can well afford it.”

“ I guess, then,” said Mr Peabody, “ she is tarnation rich.”

“ She will be,” replied the advocate drily, “ when she is in possession of the Ardenlochie property.”

“ Aye,” replied the old man, “ that may be true, but I likewise am an inheritor.”

“ That you were a relation we have always known.”

“ But may not I be the heir? ” said Peabody.

“ Certainly, if there be no other,” replied the legal gentleman.

“ And if there be another,” cried the old man, “ what

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

then? ” putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, and pulling out the letter he had just received.

“ You can’t, that’s all,” replied Mr Threeper.

“ Read that, squire,” said the old gentleman, handing the letter to him with a flourish.

CHAPTER VI

Mr Threeper received the letter; and before looking at it regarded the Yankee farmer inquisitively; but his countenance remained as imperturbable as the trunk of a pine-tree in the American forest. He then looked at the letter—first at the seal, which told nothing ; but on inspecting the superscription, he gave a slight start of recognition—Mr Peabody eyeing him very steadfastly, but sedately.

“ That ’ere letter,” says he, “ gives me to know that my claim beats cousin Clatterpenny’s to immortal smash.”

Mr Threeper made no immediate reply. “ Who? in the name of —,” cried he. “ No, no, Mr Peabody, this letter misinforms you. Conscience of me, but I am astonished, and beginning to be confounded.”

“ Why,” said Mr Peabody, “ ain’t it one Nabal M’Gab? Look ye there, he scriptifies himself Nabal M’Gab, writer to the signet, Edinburgh; and as sure as rifles, he offers to establish my right on shares.”

Mr Threeper was amazed; he did not know which way to look—whether to the right or left, or up or down. At

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

last he declared, in a kind of soliloquy, "The family papers were put into his hands on my own advice; and he betrays his trust without consulting me."

Mr Peabody observed, with a little more inflection of accent, "I guess we would call such a dry trick, 'I yank—thou yankest—he or she yanks—we yank—ye yank—they yank—we all yank together.'"

"But this is treason, Mr Peabody; he deceives you, Mr Peabody—there are others of the Ardenlochie blood in America besides you."

"Well," said the old man, "what of that?"

Mr Threeper, putting his hands to his lips, said, "Hush."

"Wherefore?"

"Hark!" said Threeper, "it was a footstep at the door."

"Well, if so be," said Peabody, "I expect it's my dog, Bonaparte, scraping to come in—if it bean't nobody else."

"Mr Peabody," replied the man of law, in a whisper, "join with us, and we'll all keep the secret."

The old man looked at him slyly, and then said, "I s'pose you are on shares with the old lady?"

"Don't talk of it," said Mr Threeper, "but join with us."

"Ah, if Cousin Clatterpenny is not the heir, mother's sister had a sister that was not grandmother to she."

"Gracious," cried Threeper, "you alarm me!"

"But it is as true as nothing," said the Vermont

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

farmer. "She was her aunt in Virginy; and died one day afore I wer'n't born."

"Indeed!" said Threeper; "and was that aunt married?"

"Well, I reckon I can't tell," replied Peabody—adding, "By jinks! I have papers in my velisse to judicate that 'ere matter—stay while I fetch them."

At these words, Mr Peabody went out of the room, and left Mr Threeper standing on the floor. "Here," said he, "is a new turn up; an aunt in Virginia! Should she have left issue, what is to be done? The old lady may give it up—but how am I to be indemnified?"

Mrs Clatterpenny, seeing him alone, and perplexed, came forward, and, with a wheedling voice, said to him, "Oh, but ye're a man of sagacity; and so," with a softened tone she added, "wi' your counselling, and the help of my own management, he thinks me a conkos mentos—hah, Mr Threeper, what's come ower you, that ye're in such constipation?"

"Enough," replied the advocate, "enough has come to my knowledge to drive us both mad. M'Gab has written to him all the infirmities of our case, and has told him that he was nearer of blood than you."

"Ay," said Mrs Clatterpenny, "that's piper's news, —would e'er I have brought you with me, had mine been a clear case? But I knew you were souple in the law; and being affected with the apprehensions, I ran the risk on shares wi' you, behaved to you—did I not? —in the most discreet manner, when you came to

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

spunge on me at breakfast-time? But surely it's no past a' possibility to be able to get our Johnny married to his daughter? "

Mr Threeper was in no condition to listen to her; he saw the desperation of her case; he thought how she had gotten to the windward of him in the agreement, and he exclaimed, "To come on such a wildgoose chase to London, and this aunt in Virginia! "

"What did he say? " cried Mrs Clatterpenny; "mercy on us, what did he say anent an aunt in Virginy? No possible, Mr Threeper. An aunt in Virginy! My star's, that's mooving."

"Yes," said he, "and she may have had children, too."

Mrs Clatterpenny continued, "An auntie in Virginy with two children! what will become of us! Oh, but ye hae given me poor advice! An auntie in Virginy!—that's the land where the tobacco grows; she will take snuff. I never thought they were wholesome that did. I came at the peril of my life, Mr Threeper; but did I think ye would tell me of an aunt in Virginy? "

Mr Threeper, alarmed at her violence, replied, in a subdued tone, "You know, madam, that I am not to blame."

"Then," cried she, with increasing fervency, "how durst you discover this aunt in Virginy, with two children? Oh, man! oh, man! I thought you were skilled in the law—but an aunt in Virginy beats everything. Mr Threeper, ye ought to be punished, yea, prosecuted to the utmost rigour of the law, for discovering this

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

aunt in Virginy. What's the worth of your wig now? Oh! oh! my heart is full—an aunt in Virginy! ”

With that she flounced out of the room, forgetful of all that was in it; but her son followed, and overtook her before she got into the street, for the lock of the street-door being a draw-bolt, her Scottish cunning could not discover the secret of that implement, and she was unable to let herself out. But when she was out, she made nimble heels, with a silent tongue, to her own lodgings; and in going across the Park, they fell in with Mr Shortridge, to whose care, as it was now near the hour to attend a lecture at the hospital, Dr Johnny consigned her, and hastened through the Horse Guards on his own affairs.

They reached her lodgings before they had any connected conversation. In speaking, however, of Miss Peabody, he expressed some doubt if she would have him; assigning for a reason, that she had some chance of getting a parcel of Highland rocks and heather.

“ Oh, Mr Shortridge, that's no a becoming speech—you're no better than a flea; who were ye biting behind their backs? ”

“ To be plain with you,” replied Mr Shortridge, “ after coming so long with you without a civil word, your son was in my mind.”

“ Our Johnny! ” cried she. “ Mr Archibald Shortridge, junior ”——

“ Well, madam.”

“ Your father was the Lord Provost of Glasgow ”——

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ Yes, Mrs Clatterpenny, and that was something.”

“ ’Deed, it was,” replied she, “ with his golden chain about his neck, his black velvet cloak and cocket hat. Oh but he was a pomp, and therefore I’ll never deny ye’re without a share of pedigree; but, Mr Archibald Shortridge, junior ”——

The young man replied tartly, “ What do you want?”

“ Oh, nothing particular, said she, “ but only just to make an observe—the which is, that there is a preternatural difference between our Johnny and the likes of you; for although I had my superior education in the Lowlands, his great-grandfather was a chieftain, wi’ bonnet and kilt, and eagle’s feather, his piper proudly marching before him, and his tail behind, when yours, Mr Archibald Shortridge, junior, was keeping a shop, and wearing breeches. So take your change out of that, Mr Archibald Shortridge, junior; ”—and she, without any apology for leaving him, mounted to her own room.

Shortridge did not, however, remain long behind her; he also walked away, equally astonished at her behaviour, and unable to account for it, for he was as yet uninformed of the secret which M’Gab had disclosed, and only knew that Dr Johnny was the old lady’s son and heir; that she was, by all accounts, the proper heiress of the Ardenlochie estate, and had concluded by some process of thought, that it would not be difficult to fix, therefore, Miss Octavia’s affections upon him. He was the more convinced of this, as she had received him but coolly when introduced to her, and that her father did

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

not think the son of the Lord Provost of Glasgow quite so important as he had expected. But the anger, the sullenness, and the crisp temper of Mrs Clatterpenny, seemed to him inexplicable: her whole conduct towards him was of the most perplexing kind. However, he went leisurely through the Horse Guards, across the Parade, towards Spring Gardens, to which he had learnt the Peabody's had removed; and in going to call on them he walked thoughtfully along. But opposite the gun, in the Park, he run against the old Squire himself, before he was recognised; and before he had well recovered from this encounter, the Squire said to him——But we shall give their conversation in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER VII

“ Well, I guess, squire, that I ain't such a snag in the stream that you need have tried whether you could make a pancake of my head. Howsomever I am glad to see you; but, I guess, yours is a pretty considerable disappointment; for our Tavy is, as you sees, almighty obstinacious.”

“ Oh,” replied the young Glasgowwegian, “ I think not of her; I have changed my mind.”

“ That there is a right good move,” replied Peabody, “ for as she ain't going to have you, you can't do better than not have her; but, squire, I have been making my calculations——What would you think of the old ladye for a spec. ? ”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

Shortridge stepped two paces back, and exclaimed—
“ Mrs Clatterpenny! are you in earnest? ”

Peabody coolly and seriously answered, “ She’s a shocking clever, nice woman, is that there old ladye, my cousin, though she ben’t college learned.”

“ How could such an imagination,” exclaimed the young man, “ enter your head? ”

“ Because she is tarnation rich,” replied Peabody.

“ Ah, you Yankees,” said the son of the Lord Provost of Glasgow—“ you Yankees are a money-seeking people; who but you would think of riches in affairs of the heart?”

The old man made no immediate reply to this, but, as if he snuffed a smell in the air, said, “ Well, that’s slick; but I guess it was an affair of the purse that brought you a-courting to our Tavy, and therefore, squire, as one purse is as good as another, so be they are of one bigness, you might do worse than take Dame Clatterpenny under the arm. You came with her in that there kettle-ship, and I reckon you knows somewhat ’bout her.”

“ Yes,” replied Shortridge drily, “ I know her worth.”

Upon this Peabody turned round briskly, and said—

“ How much, squire, may it be? ”

“ Ah, Mr Peabody, she’s too well stricken in years.”

“ I guess not, for a spec.,” replied the citizen. “ I’d have you, squire, to do think on’t, for though she ben’t so young as an angel, she ain’t quite so everlasting.”

Shortridge thought to himself that many a young man had shot at worse game, and half seriously said

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ How old do you think she is? ”

“ Why, in the way of such a trade,” said Peabody, “ I calculate a year or two don’t signify nothing.”

“ But how can I make love to her? ” said Shortridge more gravely. “ No, no, it won’t suit; it would be so queer; it’s no go.”

“ Now, I say, squire, if you think prudent, I’ll bet a goose to a gallon of punch that we’ll make a match on’t in less than no time and jemini.”

“ But,” replied Shortridge seriously, “ what would my acquaintance say? ”

This put mettle in the old man, and he replied with redoubled energy—

“ Why, let them do their damndest. Come, come, squire, don’t be ’feminate; and if so be as you ain’t so bold as to speak for yourself, I’ll be ’sponsible for you, and speak to her right away to see how the land lies, while you make your own calculations.”

This proposition, which seemed at first so absurd, by iteration appeared to the young man not quite so unlikely as it at first seemed; and instead of going back with Peabody to Fludyer Street, he walked with him towards Buckingham Palace, discoursing, as they went along, from less to more about the wealth of Mrs Clatterpenny. For good and substantial reasons, best known to himself, the Vermont farmer urged her merits with all his eloquence, and said not a word of the news that he had received that morning from Mr M’Gab respecting his own priority of claim, or the more formid-

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

able claimant that might be found in Virginia. In truth, Mr Peabody was an excellent relation; he saw that his cousin had come to London on a profitless errand, and thought that she might not be so inaccessible to the addresses of Mr Shortridge as if she had been the real heiress, and he concluded that the case of Shortridge was not greatly different. The disparity of years never once occurred to him; indeed, why should it? for there is no greater harm in a young lady marrying an old man than there is in a young man marrying an old woman. Mr Shortridge in time thought so too; and saw, since the proposition was made, many amiable qualities in Mrs Clatterpenny which he had not before discovered. Thus, it came to pass that before he returned along the walk with the Vermont farmer, he thought that he might make many more wrongheaded journeys to London than if he took Mr Peabody's suggestion into consideration.

In the meantime, Mr Tompkins, whom we have too long neglected, was not quite at his ease. He had heard of the death of Hector Dhu, in which he felt so much interest, and he thought that it was very opportunely that it should have so happened at the time it did, and Octavia in London.

Just at that moment he recollected he had heard from an acquaintance that Mr Threeper the advocate from Edinburgh was in town. All night he had spent as comfortless as the old lady; and he rose betimes, determined to take the advice of Mr Threeper.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

Accordingly, as soon as he had finished breakfast, he went to the hotel in Parliament Street, where he understood the gentleman was staying. The waiter, however, told him that he was gone out to breakfast, when he called; but the porter recollected that he had only gone to Mrs Clatterpenny's in Fluyder Street; whereupon, with Yankee breeding, he resolved to follow him to that domicile. But, when he arrived there, the bird was flown. Mr Threeper and the old lady had gone to pay the visit which we have described.

Mr Tompkins, somewhat disappointed, prolonged his walk into the Park, meditating on his situation, and resolving to seek Mr Threeper there in the course of a short time. But when he was returning from the door, he met Pompey, the black servant, at the inn, inquiring, with a forensic wig-box in his arm, for Mrs Clatterpenny.

Tompkins, with Virginian brevity towards negroes, told Pompey to inquire for her at that house, although he saw by the direction on the box that it was for Alexander Threeper, Esq., advocate, Pitt Street, Edinburgh. He might have told Pompey to carry it to the hotel; but it was not consistent, as he conceived, with the relative position of himself and the negro. Thus it happened, that when Mrs Clatterpenny and Mr Shortridge had returned from their encounter in the Park, the black servant, with Mr Threeper's wig-box, was in the house waiting for her return. He did not, however, intrude upon her attention while Mr Shortridge was with her;

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

but when that young gentleman went away, he made himself known, and his errand.

Mrs Clatterpenny, at all times delighted with a little gossip, especially with servants, could not resist the temptation which was afforded to her by the appearance of Pompey. She never recollected that he spoke such unintelligible English; and desired the maid to shew him up. Indeed, his call was most propitious; for the intelligence which she had received of the aunt in Virginia had greatly discomposed her;—her thoughts were floating wild like the carry and the clouds of a stormy day. More than an hour would elapse before Dr Johnny would be relieved from the lecture which he had gone to hear; and Mr Threeper eschewed her, as she thought, entirely. All her projects were castles in the air; every one had vanished; and she was most forlorn; so that nothing could happen more opportunely than the news of Pompey being in the house, and bringing with him the box containing the professional wig and gown of Mr Threeper.

She desired him to be shewn up; and while she thus aloud lamented the calamities that had overtaken her, the negro was ascending the stairs.

“Woe’s me!” said she, “misfortune, like old maids, never pays a visit without a tribe of others gallanting along with her; what am I to do, beguiled of my birth-right by an auntie in Virginy and two sons? It’s a resurrection—a dream—a vision—and a mystery in the watches of the night. Then our Johnny to be flung

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

over the ramparts of the brig by that Yankee Doodle damsel, his own cousin! It's, however, some comfort, that I have a companion in affliction;—poor, waff Mr Threeper, what will become of him? what will he do with his wig and gown now? ”

But at that moment Pompey entered with the box for Mr Threeper, and what ensued we shall presently relate.

CHAPTER VIII

Pompey set down the box on the floor, and with a droll sidelong look at Mrs Clatterpenny, raised himself into an erect posture behind it.

“ Come away, black lad; what's your errand? ”

Pompey did not immediately reply to her; but slyly said aside, in an under voice—“ Ah! the old lady has got a drop in eye. Missy, missy, me beg missy, dis box is for the gentleman; and was no recollect at our hos.”

“ Oh aye, so it is,” replied Mrs Clatterpenny; “ it contains the ornaments of his profession—his wig and gown. Well, you may leave it and go downstairs; and I'll hear what he directs about it in a short time; for it's no consistent with the course of nature that he should not be soon here.”

Pompey turned to go downstairs at this; but she continued—

“ Black lad, I trow that ye have na been lang from the niggers. I'll no say that ye're one yourself; for

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

there's a great difference between a crow and a black-bird. Like's an ill mark. And, although it maun be allowed that ye're a little high in the colour, I would not just take it on me to say that ye're a nigger."

Pompey did not very clearly understand this; indeed he thought the meaning very different; and looking a little queer at her, said—

"What you think, Missy? You go to bed? Ah! missy, de strong waters dam strong."

"What's that ye're saying?" said she; "canna ye no learn to speak the English language, and make a Christian of yourself."

"Oh, Missy, me dat already."

"Aye, aye, where do ye come frae?"

"Me come from what you call Charles Town."

"Poor lad, that's in the wilds of America; it's but a black Christianity ye would learn there."

While our heroine was in the midst of this discourse with Pompey, the servant girl of the house came in with a note, and delivered it without speaking to Mrs Clatterpenny, who looked at the superscription with some surprise; and, as the maid went away without speaking, she requested Pompey also to retire to the stair-head till she would see what the letter was about.

Pompey, who was impressed with an idea that she had taken a little too much, did, however, as she requested; but there was a kind of laughing curiosity in his visage, as he quitted the room, which shewed that he was not done with the discourse she had opened; but

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

he disappeared; and she walked towards the window, holding the letter.

"Please peace and the king," said she, "what can this be about? It's for Mr Threeper. Odd, I'll open't," Accordingly, she undid the seal, and read aloud, but not continuously, as follows :

"Eminent advocate from Edinburgh—acquainted with the feudal law. My relationship to Hector Dhu of Ardenlochie—would ask your professional advice."

At this the old lady gave a vehement interjection. "Advice!" said she, walking about agitated. Pompey, mimicking her agitation, looked in at the door for an instant, and drew out his head again.

"I declare," said she, "this is a treasonable correspondence;" and, looking at the box, she added—"I ought not to stand upon trifles now. If I were to see Mr Tompkins, and pass myself off in the wig and gown for Mr Threeper, I might get at the bottom of this gun-powder plot."—And, going towards the door, she said—

"Black lad, do you know if the gentleman that the letter came from is in the house?"

"Es, missy; he wait," said Pompey.

"Very well," replied Mrs Clatterpenny, "just step and say to him from me, that Mr Threeper will see him."

Pompey again withdrew, and Mrs Clatterpenny in a flurry drew out the wig and gown from the box, and had arrayed herself in them, when Pompey shewed in Mr Tompkins to her and retired.

"Your name is Tompkins?"

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

"It is, sir," replied the gentleman, with a look of surprise.

"I am not to be seen," said she, "commonly at this time of the day, for I divide the hours, and this is commonly set apart for my philosophical studies. Do you know, sir, that I have made a considerable discovery this morning? Seeing that black man, I had a notion with other folks that he was come of the seed of Cain; but when I thought, sir, how all the old world was drowned but those that were with Noah, I could not divine how the nigger kind came to be saved; but the discovery I have made anent them is most pleasant. Sir, do you know that I could wager a plack to a bawbee that some of the seed of Cain creepit into the Ark with the unclean beasts?"

The physiognomy of Tompkins was rather excited than softened by this speech, and he said to himself, "Strange-looking fish this! But the law has its curiosities as well as the other learned professions." He then said aloud, "Hearing, sir, of your arrival in London, I have presumed to call on you with these papers; they relate to family concerns of some importance—a property in Scotland."

Mrs Clatterpenny took the papers, and looking aside from Mr Tompkins, trembled from head to foot, yet at the same time affecting the utmost indifference, said, "Is the property considerable?"

"I have always understood so," replied the young Virginian.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ That will increase the difficulties of the case,” said said she ; “ however, leave the papers with me, and I will ’vestigate them; but I have doubts,” and she shook her head and the wig in a most professional manner.

“ Then,” said Tompkins, “ then you have heard, possibly, that Mr Peabody from Vermont, and Mrs Clatterpenny of Edinburgh, are also claimants? ”

“ Oh, is it the Ardenlochie estate? I have heard something of that property; but Peabody has not a leg to stand on; as for Mrs Clatterpenny, she’s under a respondenti, and has a revisidendo.”

“ You surprise me,” said Tompkins; “ is that possible? ”

“ Everything, sir, is possible,” said Mrs Clatterpenny ; “ that’s a maxim of law; ” and softening her voice, she added, to herself, but loud enough to be heard, “ He has not given me a fee, and this is the first consultation—I observe, sir,” added she louder, “ that you have neglected to indorse the fee.”

Tompkins, greatly astonished, exclaimed, “ strange eccentricity! ” and he added aloud to her, “ As it is less an opinion than an examination, I deferred.”

“ Very likely,” said she; “ but we of the Scotch bar never demur till we are fee’d, the same being according to the books of sederunt and session, founded on the statute of limitations.”

“ I beg ten thousand pardons,” said Mr Tompkins, “ I came unprepared.”

At this moment she was observed to listen, and then

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

she cried,—“ Eh, gude be wi’ me! there’s his own foot on the stair; ” but her expedients were not exhausted, and she exclaimed aloud, which he thought in character, “ But, sir, call again, sir, for I’ve a case in point.”

Mr Tompkins, scarcely able to preserve his gravity, went away, exclaiming to himself, “ a delicate hint to come better prepared.”

As soon as the door was shut, Mrs Clatterpenny restored the wig and gown hastily into the box, and placed herself, with the papers in her hand, in a meditative posture, in an elbow-chair at the upper end of the room. Her fears were quite right; the footstep she had heard on the stair was that of the advocate; she had prepared herself to receive him, and he presently entered the room.

“ Oh, Mr Threeper,” cried she, “ but ye’re come in the nick of time! Who do ye think has been here; and what have I no done? These are all the lad Tompkins’s papers and pedigrees. What do ye advise me about slipping them into the fire? ”

“ Explain yourself,” said Mr Threeper, astonished at what she could mean.

The answer was—“ No woman but myself could have won such a victory. Ye see, here was I, groaning in the affliction of an aunty in Virginy, with two children, that ye have brought on me, when our servant lass delivered two lines from Mr Tompkins, wanting your advice, you know. Being in the way, and we being in partnership, to save the money, I just put on your wig and gown

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

there, and passed myself to the lad frae Virginy, who gave me these papers, thinking I was you."

Mr Threeper, in the utmost consternation, cried, " Did he take you for me? "

But she parried this question by saying,—“ Had he known you as well as I do, he would ne'er have done any such thing; but he was surprised at the jurisdiction I maintained, for I quoted to him maxims of law, and gave him an opinion of counsel in the most judicious manner."

Mr Threeper smote his forehead, and exclaimed with indescribable vexation—" He will speak of it, thinking his consultation was with me! My professional character is blasted for ever! "

" I assure you," said Mrs Clatterpenny, " it was impossible for yourself to have done better. I sustained your part with great ability. No—I cannot think how I managed as I did; I was just confounded at my own learning and judgment. But come, look at the papers, for he'll be back soon wi' money in hand for a fee—think of that, Mr Threeper."

CHAPTER IX

We are in a moralizing vein, and it is but right that we should allow the courteous reader to partake of our solemn wisdom. The case of Mrs Clatterpenny was now ticklish. It seemed doubtful if in any way she could realize the inducement which she held out to Mr

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

Threeper to take her case in hand, conscious of no longer being able to make herself heir, and told in plain terms that Miss Peabody would not have Dr Johnny. The aspects of her fortune at this juncture were truly dismal, nor were the prospects of Mr Threeper more brilliant; he found that the bargain he had made with the old lady was of no avail—the chance of heirship had vanished, and with it half the bargain, and the other moiety had been scared away by the rejection of poor Johnny.

However, as Mrs Clatterpenny had by a most strange yet characteristic manœuvre acquired possession of Mr Tompkins's papers, Mr Threeper agreed that they were worthy of perusal; and for that purpose he retired with the old lady to her bedroom, where for some time he earnestly employed himself in searching their meaning.

When a considerable time had elapsed, and Mrs Clatterpenny saw that he had nearly read the papers, she inquired dolorously what he thought of Mr Tompkins's right.

"Oh," said Mr Threeper, "it is clear—it admits not of a doubt."

"Dear me," replied the old lady, "how could you ever pass yourself off to me as a man of law and learning, and not to be able to make a doubt?"

"Come, come, Mrs Clatterpenny," said the molested advocate, "a truce with idle talk—this is no trifle to you, and I assure you it is not to me—we have incurred prodigious expense; I have lost my time."

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ And whose fault was that? ” cried the lady. “ I’m sure, had ye no been in a needful condition, puir body, ye ne’er would hae come sae far afield with me.”

“ I tell you, madam,” exclaimed Threeper, angrily, “ our situation cannot be worse! ”

“ I’m blithe to hear you say so,” was her answer ; “ for the next change will mend it.”

“ Yes,” said Mr Threeper, pathetically, “ if we survive existing circumstances.”

“ Survive! ” exclaimed Mrs Clatterpenny. “ Oh, but ye have a faint heart; oh, but ye’re of little faith, and void of understanding. For my part, while there is life there is hope; and I have had a thought in my head for some time, ever since I misdoubted the inheritance, and especially since our Johnny got his ditty from Miss”——

“ What do you mean? ” cried Mr Threeper, awakening from his astonishment; upon which the old lady, looking very knowing, went up to him, and, with an emphatic whisper, said—“ Will you give me an opinion of counsel free gratis, and I’ll tell you a secret? ” and she drew her lips together, and appeared very brimful.

“ Madam,” said the lawyer indignantly, “ I wish to hear no more of your secrets.”

“ I don’t doubt it,” said she, “ but this ye will allow is something solid.”

“ Indeed! ” replied Mr Threeper. “ Well, what is it? ”

“ You confess,” replied Mrs Clatterpenny, “ we’re both at the bottom of despair? ”

“ I do—I can see no hope.”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ But promise to advise me.”

“ My advice is worth nothing.”

“ Ye never said a truer word,” said Mrs Clatterpenny; “ but in my happier days it was valued at two red guineas every time we had a confabulation in your library.”

Mr Threeper, without affecting to have heard her, inquired what she would be at.

“ What would you think,” said she, “ of counselling me in this sore distress and straitened circumstances ”——

“ To do what? ” said the lawyer, half seriously and half vexedly, to which Mrs Clatterpenny said, looking aside from him——

“ To make myself winsome in the sight of old cousin Peabody? I don’t think, Mr Threeper, it’s a head-shaking accident at all; and surely you must allow it would be a most hard case were you and me, after perilling life in coming to London town, to return home, you with your finger in your mouth, and I no better? ”

“ Our voyage,” cried Mr Threeper, ardently, “ was rational, compared to this. How could such an imagination enter your head? ”

“ Just by the course of nature,” said Mrs Clatterpenny. “ But, in sobriety, don’t you think I might do worse than accept the hand and affections of Mr Peabody? ”

At this question Mr Threeper looked very grave, and said, “ Has he indeed made you such an offer? ”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ There’s time enough for a point-blank,” said she.

“ True—but has he shewn you any signs? ” said the astonished lawyer.

“ Goodness me! Mr Threeper,” was the reply, “ would you expect him to fall on his bended knees, and make a declaration of flames and darts? My expectations are more moderate.”

“ If what you tell me be true,” replied he, “ I think you ought to account yourself in your jeopardy the most fortunate of womankind.”

“ In a sense, no doubt,” said she; “ but ye know, Mr Threeper, that at his time of life, and the years of discretion that I have reached, changes must be wrought by prudent handling. Old folk in this world, as the lawyers well know, woo by pactions.”

“ Do you expect me,” said he, “ to be your negotiator? No, madam, I have been guilty of absurdities enough with you already.”

“ With me, Mr Threeper!—ye never was guilty of an absurdity with me!”

“ Pshaw! ” cried Mr Threeper, and flounced away, just at the moment that Peabody was standing on the landing-place of her parlour to speak to her for Squire Shortridge. He looked at Threeper as he passed down, but said nothing; only he remarked to himself, as he saw him bouncing downstairs,—“ Well, he is as nimble as a pea fried without butter; ” and in the course of a minute, Mrs Clatterpenny, in a great flustration, joined him, crying, “ Sweet Mr Peabody, but this is a vastly

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

warm day;" and having by this time opened the door of her parlour, she added, " I'm tired off my feet."

" Well, if so be," cried he, " I expect you should sit down."

She said to herself, " He does not offer me a chair; but it's a case of extremity, and I must not be standing on trifles.—Mr Peabody, will ye no be seated? " With that the old gentleman took a chair and seated himself; upon which she added—" Now, Mr Peabody, that's what I like. I like to see friends among friends make themselves at home." But the American, without noticing her observation, fanned himself with his broad-brimmed straw hat, and ejaculated—

" Well, I guess it be tarnation warmer here than in Vermont."

" I didna misdoubt it," replied Mrs Clatterpenny; " for by everything I have heard, Vermont must be a most pleasant country, a perfect land of Canaan, besides flowing with milk and honey;—ye'll have hills there? "

" I guess we have," said Mr Peabody, " and tarnal big ones too."

" No doubt," said she, " high and most romantical. How weel content I would be to spend my latter end in Vermont, skipping upon the mountains, and harkening in the valleys to the singing of nightingales, and poets, and such other fowls; and I'm sure, cousin Peabody, from what I discern of your taste and understanding, your house must be in a very airy situation."

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ It ben’t though,” cried he, “ being in a hollow, as you see, between neighbour Timpson’s fen and deacon Screechwell’s cedar swamp.”

None daunted by the intelligence, the loving dame exclaimed—“ Dear me, does cedar grow so near your habitation? Oh, but it must be a scriptural tabernacle, putting us aye in mind of the cedars of Lebanon and Solomon’s Temple. No doubt there are great guns of the gospel there? ”

“ Yes, I reckon,” said Mr Peabody; “ religion is in popularity in Vermont at present.”

“ Oh,” replied his cousin, “ but that’s a comely thing! for since you lost poor dear Mrs Peabody, ye have been feeding on thin fodder. I have, for seven long years and more, known what it is to be a lanerly widow; but it’s no the fortune of womankind to change their condition at pleasure; you men of the male sect have a great advantage over us.”

Mr Peabody thought that this was the proper juncture for putting in a word for his friend the squire.

“ Well, I calculate, talking of marrying for a second spell, that Mr Shortridge, what came cargo with you, is a dreadfulest proper fellow.”

“ What’s that ye say of him? ” cried the lady.

“ Well, I do say it,” replied Peabody; “ and if he ben’t, there are no snakes in Virginia.”

“ It would have been well for us had there never been an auntie there.”

At this moment, Pompey, who had begun to grow im-

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

patient at being kept so long, opened the door softly, and seeing the pathetic posture of the two cousins, exclaimed softly, looking with white eyes—"What's iss? my eye!" But he withdrew his head at the same moment. He had seen, however, enough to excite his curiosity, and he again gently opened the door and looked in. What he beheld to attract his attention so particularly we know not, but he inserted his whole body, and with soundless feet fairly went into the room, and placed himself behind their chairs, listening to, without much understanding the drift of their discourse; for it is quite unnecessary, when man or woman is actuated by a genuine curiosity, to understand what others may be saying. This endowment Pompey had in the highest degree of perfection; and, on the present occasion, it was in some measure excited by the previous opinion that he had formed of the condition of Mrs Clatterpenny. Observing that the rawness of the morning air, in coming across the Park, had made her complexion of a glowing red and purple, while the tidings she had received from Mr Threeper, respecting her aunt in Virginia, had filled her eyes with water, Pompey had made a very natural conclusion from her appearance at that time, for her looks had received no improvement by the tidings which she had learned of so near and dear a relation being found. But it is time to resume the thread of our discourse, which the stealthy entrance of the blackamoor has obliged us to suspend.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

CHAPTER X

Without observing that Pompey was behind them, and listening, Mrs Clatterpenny continued—" Talking of second marriages, Mr Shortridge is no a commodity for my money. No, no, dear cousin Peabody, if ever I make a change, and it's no a small matter that would tempt me, my taste would choose something more to the purpose, for he's ower young."

" I expect," said Peabody, " that he's older than you think, and you ben't yourself so old in my eyes as you look"—at the same time he turned aside mumbling, " though ugly enough to stop a sawmill or a nigger's burial."

" What you say," replied Mrs Clatterpenny, " is a most just observe. I have aye been thought vastly younger than I look like; I was even more so when in my teens."

Mr Peabody looked askance at her, and said to himself, " That's a bouncer." Presently, however, he added, in a more conciliatory key, " But don't you think the squire a terrible smart man? I know he is."

" Oh, oh," said the old lady, " he's jealous of Mr Shortridge, 'cause we came in the same ship. No, no, sweet Mr Peabody, it will be long to the day or my fancy fix on him; if ever I make another choice, I'll choose a sober, sensible man like you; and I think I would prefer an American, for they say that the 'mericans make the best of husbands."

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

The Vermont farmer looked at her queerly, and then said, "I guess the Scotch women make the best of wives."

This return of the compliment quite overwhelmed the modesty of Mrs Clatterpenny, and she cried, covering her cheek with her hand, and presenting her palm towards Mr Peabody, and averting her head, "Oh, spare my blushes!"

"There is no occasion to blush at all," said he, "unless you like it; but I have an omnipotent wish to speak of that 'ere Glasgow squire."

"Speak not of him," exclaimed she, with a languishing sigh; "oh, my too combustible heart!"

At this crisis she laid her hand on Mr Peabody's; and Pompey from behind, with a leering look, put his head between them.

"The devil!" cried Mr Peabody, starting off apart.

"Oh missy, oh massa!" cried Pompey, looking at the astonished pair.

"I'll faint," cried she; "hold out your arms, sweet Mr Peabody, that I may faint in them."

Peabody, however, gave an upward look, and she fell into the arms of Pompey, upon which she uttered a shrill scream and ran off, followed by the negro, while the Yankee, looking knowingly after them, said coolly—"Well, this be pretty special too; and yet I expect she has the rights on't. A woman of her years to take up with the squire, would be an Ethiopian shame; but I reckon, had he been of as good an age as I, she would have come to. But here is her 'torney at law; I'll speak

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

to him.—Mister—I say, mister, if so be you ha'n't cause for scudding, I would like to talk a word or so with you concerning our cousin Dame Clatterpenny's circumstance, because, you see, she is my relation."

At this summons, Mr Threeper, who was on the landing-place, entered the room, and said, " At your service, Mr Peabody."

As if the old man was at a loss what to say, he eyed the advocate from top to toe, and then continued—" I expect, mister, that cousin Clatterpenny has been glorified some at my claim to them 'ere lands in Scotland State."

Mr Threeper drew himself up erectly, and said with a superciliousness worthy of his profession, taking a pinch of snuff at the same time—" Oh my dear sir, don't deceive yourself; your claim is worth nothing."

" That's plain, I guess," replied Mr Peabody. " If I was not somehow by instinct thinking so myself, or I am a cranberry; and bottle me for gin in a Rotterdam greybeard, if I would go to pursue cousin Clatterpenny with law, if so be as how we could settle it friendly."

Mr Threeper pricked up his ears at this; it seemed in accordance with what the old lady had been bespeaking his counsel for, and he ejaculated to himself—" Ah! what's this? "

Mr Peabody continued—

" Now, you think her as valuable as nothing; but I'd give my male cow and three heifers, to have another such in my house at Mount Pisgah, State of Vermont."

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ Is this possible? ” cried the advocate aloud. “ Yes, Mrs Clatterpenny is indeed, a most surprising woman,—shrewd, discerning, nimble for her years; managing in her cares every shilling she spends, and she sees both sides of it before she parts with it. I know few like her.”

Peabody replied “ that she indeed took care of Number One.—And so you think,” said he, “ that her claim to be inheritor is better than mine after all? ”

Mr Threeper hesitated a little, and throwing back his head, with professional sapience replied—“ Upon that subject, the integrity of my gown denies me freedom of speech; but this I know, and may say to you as her kinsman, that according to the evidence given in, she has quite as good a chance of establishing her claim, as you have of proving yours. More it becomes not me to say; less perhaps had been more prudent.”

The Vermont farmer looked a little grave at this, and after pondering well for a short time, he said—

“ Which, now, in your opinion (I does not ask your opinion according to law), but which would you commend for she and I to do—to half stakes, to go to law, or to 'spouse? ”

To this Threeper promptly replied—“ I could never advise her to go half with you. As for going to law, it is not graceful among relations.”

“ Well,” said the American, “ you a'n't the first man who didn't magnify his own trade.”

“ But,” continued Mr Threeper, without changing his posture, and looking like a dungeon of wit, “ if Mrs Clat-

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

terpenny herself has not strong objections to coming again under the conjugal yoke, why, I think ”—and he stopped at these words, suddenly arrested in thought.

“ Now, mister,” said Peabody, waiting for his explanation, “ and what may that think be? ”

The Edinburgh lawyer replied very adroitly, “ it would be a happy way of putting an end to family differences.”

“ I calculate,” said Peabody, “ it might be the beginning of family differences; but, mister,”——

“ Sir? ”

“ Couldn’t you, in a far off way, round a corner, see how the wind hauls with the old ladye? ”

Mr Threeper, at this, shook his head in the most sagacious manner, and replied—“ Impossible! I am her professional adviser, my duty is to protect her; couldn’t think of recommending her to marry—no, Mr Peabody, not even you.”

This was uttered with such solemnity, that it had a manifest effect upon the old gentleman, who immediately said—“ Well, that mayn’t be quite propriety; but couldn’t you, by the way of a squint, give her to understand ’em ’ere three ways of scalding the hog?—But, between you and I, I’d rather go halves.”

Mr Threeper started at this, and, stepping aside, exclaimed—“ Can he know of Tompkins’s advantage? ” But, before he was upright, Peabody cried—“ I was saying, mister, I’d rather go halves than splice, for, you know, she can talk.”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

Just at this moment a knocking was heard on the door, and, on opening it, Mr Shortridge made his appearance, not in the best order. He had been with Miss Octavia, and had not been treated by her as, in his own opinion, his merits deserved; without, also, knowing the whole facts of the case, he had begun to suspect, that his father, notwithstanding his long forecasting faculty, had cut before the point in supposing that an American lady could be so easily won. In short, the young gentleman was much flurried, and his endeavour to preserve a shew of serenity was palpable to every beholder; but, having introduced him, in this agitated state, to Mr Peabody and Mr Threeper, it merits a place in the next Chapter to relate what ensued.

CHAPTER XI

Mr Archibald Shortridge, jun., came forward, with that smirk, bow, and cringe which betokens a gem of the first water in a certain metropolis of the west of Scotland, and which, on the present occasion, there is no need to name.

“Glad, gentlemen,” said he, “I am to have found you together. Nothing like doing business off hand. Mr Peabody, I have considered your advice, and I do think that many a man has matched worse than with such a lady.”

The American took, for some time, no part in the conversation, but he listened with ears apert, and now and

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

then spoke to himself, or, as the players have it in their books, he let the audience know what he thought in a whisper, aside. But the Edinburgh lawyer, more professionally loquacious, said to the young merchant—"So he seems to think."

On hearing this, the Vermont native said to himself—"He has swallowed the hook!"

Mr Shortridge not overhearing him, addressed Mr Threeper, and said—"As you have great influence with her, might I solicit your aid?"

The advocate, conceiving that he spoke of Mr Peabody's *penchant* for Mrs Clatterpenny, replied—"I have just told Mr Peabody that professional delicacy lays an interdict on all direct interference on my part."

Mr Shortridge, who thought only of himself, imagining that the observation applied to his own case, answered—"I beg your pardon, but I have to thank Mr Peabody for the kind and warm interest he has taken in my behalf."

Mr Threeper, still in error, said—"It is grateful in you to be anxious to repay it, but, in this matter, for the reason I have stated, I cannot interfere; you may, however, with superior effect."

Mr Shortridge having no other interjection at hand, exclaimed—"I am surprised!"

"Not more than I am," replied Mr Threeper; "the lady surprised me, Mr Peabody surprised me, and you have surprised me." And, in saying these words, he rapped upon the lid of his snuff-box, opened it, and took a pinch.

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ Then you don’t think,” inquired Mr Shortridge, “ that it is a very ridiculous affair? ” Mr Threeper, filling the other nostril, said—“ It is a most judicious affair.” The young merchant, delighted to hear this, declared, in the ardour of his heart, that the thought had never entered his head till Mr Peabody spoke to him.

At this the American came hurriedly towards them, crying—“ I swear, Mister and Squire, we be all on the wrong tack; but here comes cousin Clatterpenny herself, and we shall soon be all slick.”

At this moment the lady entered the apartment. Brimful of news she appeared, or rather with expectations; but, however that may be, her face was as a book in which men might read strange matters.

“ Eh, gentlemen,” cried she, “ whatna brewing’s in the cauldron now, that you’re laying your heads thegither, as if ye were three wise men from the East? Dear cousin, you being a ’merican, should recollect that ye come out of the West.”

While she was saying this, Shortridge, in a low voice, requested him to speak a good word in favour of his suit; and Peabody, at the same moment, whispered to Mr Threeper—“ Can’t you tell her of my three offers? ”

But, before he had time to answer, Mrs Clatterpenny inquired, in his ear, if he had made an incision.

All this caused a little delay, during which, the American, becoming somewhat impatient, spoke himself to Mrs Clatterpenny—“ Well, cousin,” said he, “ I have been making my calculations with this here ’torney, and he will tell you the terms.”

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

“ Oh,” cried Mrs Clatterpenny, with a languishing and emphatic leer, “ do not speak of that; ours will not be a bargaining; I’ll surrender at discretion.”

The Glasgow beau, no longer able to repress his ardent passion, caught her in his arms, exclaiming—“ My dear ma’am, I could not have anticipated, so early, such happiness! ”

Mrs Clatterpenny, amazed at his freedom cried, pushing him off—“ Keep your distance, Mr Shortridge; another cat shall lap in my porringer. Ah! the tender affections cannot be controlled, can they, my sweet cousin?”

“ Now,” said Mr Peabody, “ I sha’n’t be a sweet cousin but upon conditions. Do you, sir, being her ’torney, tell her.”

The business was proceeding rather quicker than a lawsuit; but Mr Threeper, shifting his position, said, in a suppressed accent, to Mrs Clatterpenny, “ I’ve has spoken to me in the most satisfactory manner. I have arranged all happily for you, and will secure as good a settlement as I can.”

“ I am greatly obligated to you, Mr Threeper. No a man that walks the Parliament House knows better how many blue beans it takes to make five than yourself. You shall get a solatium for this turn.”

At the same moment Peabody turned round to Shortridge, and said, “ She won’t have you; and therefore I calculate on having her myself.”

“ What!” indignantly cried Shortridge—“ choused?”

Before he could say another word, Tompkins and Miss

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

Octavia entered the room; and Tompkins, stepping forward, said to Mr Threeper, "Have you told him?"

The reply was a mystery to all present.

"I have neither yet had time nor opportunity."

"Then I will do it myself," said Tompkins; and turning round to Peabody, he added, "I hope, sir, that the only objection to my union with your daughter is now removed. This learned gentleman has examined my claim to the Ardenlochie estates, and has declared me the heir-at-law."

Shortridge, who was a little nettled, said, "I see the cause of her setting her affections on you, old gentleman."

"Well, I do so likewise," replied Peabody.

"But, my sweet cousin," said Mrs Clatterpenny.

"To Jericho!" cried Peabody; "but I say, mister, is that 'ere true what Charlie Tompkins has been a-telling?"

"It is," replied Threeper, with professional dignity; "his evidence is indubitable, and no possible obstacle can be set up to his claim."

"Well then, Tavy," said the American father, "I'll be no longer a 'pediment; he may take you by the arm and walk in the streets when you likes."

Mrs Clatterpenny was confounded, and scarcely knowing what she said, cried, "Am I an owl in the desert?"

"No, madam," said Mr Threeper, in the best style of the coterie of the stove in the Parliament House, "the constancy of my attention to your concerns should convince you that some interest nearer and dearer than a professional engagement has knit me to your cause."

"Ah, Mr Threeper!" replied the widow, "but, if I

THE AUNT IN VIRGINIA

marry again, my jointure by the dear deceased doctor goes away, and ye are a man yourself of no substance."

As this was said, Mr Tompkins stepped forward and addressed Mrs Clatterpenny somewhat formally.

"Let not that, however," said he, "my dear lady, be an obstacle to your union; for I have given him an undertaking to settle on you a thousand dollars a year to mitigate your disappointment."

"Mr Threeper, is this true?" exclaimed the old lady. "Oh, ye son of deceitfulness, no to tell me but ye had interests nearer and dearer than professional engagements!"

She then turned round to Mr Tompkins, and thanked him for his generosity with one of her most gracious smiles; while Peabody muttered to himself, "A thousand dollars a year! Well, it would be a good spec. to have her yet;" and going towards her, he said, "My dear cousin"——

"My dear cousin!" said she, with a toss of her head, "get you to Jericho!" And she flung as it were the old man away.

Mr Shortridge, on seeing this, said, "None of them, ma'am, have been actuated with such true regard as me."

"'Deed, Mr Shortridge," replied the old lady, "I see that ye have a thousand reasons for saying so; but I am no a nymph in her juvenility. No, no; I'm oure auld a hen to be caught by chaff."

And, in saying this, she wished the young couple all manner of health and joy for the remainder of their lives, in which we cordially join.

Blackwood's Magazine, January-February 1833.

IV
THE CHIEF; OR,
THE GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

THE CHIEF; OR, THE GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

CHAPTER I

There's some that ken and some that dinna ken
The whumpled meaning of this unco tale.—RAMSAY.

THE castle of Inverstrone stands on a little promontory that abuts into the Western ocean. On the side towards the sea, is an abrupt precipice, at the bottom of which lies a long shallow, dangerous to vessels bound for the harbour of Strone, which is quite safe and well sheltered when attained. It is the mouth, as the name implies, of the little river Strone, and is altogether exceedingly picturesque and romantic.

The castle is, or was, inhabited by the Chief of the Clan Jamphrey, Roderick M'Goul, a personage of much repute in those parts, and of great importance to himself. On the death of the late Chief, he succeeded to the estate as next of kin; but he was not a very near relation, his father being thirteenth cousin of the third remove of the late Chieftain's mother, who was cousin-german of his grandfather, seventh brother of the then Chief of the clan.

When Roderick came to the property, he was rather low in the world, a quarrier in the Ballyhoolish slate-quarries, and learning had taken no particular pains in consequence with his education; but still he possessed many Highland virtues. He was hospitable to a de-

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

gree that would have made all the Lowlands blush for themselves, and he lived as a chieftain should do, at hack and manger, though in wet weather the roof of his castle leaked at every pore, and the owls in the battlements were unmolested denizens.

His household was numerous and not very orderly, but Elspeth, the housekeeper, was over all the other servants, and particularly celebrated for legendary lore and mutton-hams. Roderick himself was not very active, and around the castle Nature was permitted to revel in all the rankness with which she yet exercises dominion in some parts of the Highlands.

For several days during summer, in the month of July, a thick fog invested the sea and the environs of the castle of Inverstrone. The Chief said it was a shame to Providence for permitting the fog to lie so long, and soon would be seen of it. Nor was he far wrong; for, in the afternoon of the fifth day, the wind began to blow from the south-west, with drizzly showers on the squalls, betokening, as Elspeth prognosticated, a night that was not for haymaking. She was brought from the Lowlands, and spoke the Christian tongue rather better than her master.

The foggy blustering afternoon was succeeded by a gloaming of more violence; the owls shrieked often, and Elspeth, with many of the servants, saw such sights and heard such lamentations, that obliged her to make a communication on the subject to the Chief.

He was sitting at the time in his best parlour, dozing,

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

for lack of something more particular to do, in an easy-chair covered with old chintz.

The wind roughened the sea; the ominous mist was thinning, and the dark waves were dashing themselves into foam on the rocks that seaward lay at the bottom of the castle. Everything portended a tempestuous night, when Elspeth came into the room to make her communication.

"Well is it," said she, "for you to be taking your ease in a cozy chair, when such signs of trouble are abroad."

"Ay, ay, goot Eppie," said he, "and what are your prognostications?"

"I have seen," said she, "a standing-out feather in the black hen's wing, large and great."

"Well; umph!" said the Chief.

"I never saw," she added, "such a symbol without a fulfilment; before the morn at set of sun, a stranger will be here."

"Very well," was the reply, "and what have ye got in the pantry?"

"Ah!" said she, "that is ever your response when I tell you the likes; but the feather that gives this warning is big and black. I wish it may bode any good."

"Hoot, toot," cried the Chief, "to be surely that is always what you say."

"But there has been other signs of more note. Just when we first saw the sticking-out feather, a splinter leapt out of the chimney ribs of the shape of a living coffin."

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

“ Ay, a coffin; umph! ”

“ And that was not all, even now when we lighted the cruise, there was news on the wick, a red star; all things betoken hasty news, Lord preserve us.”

At this moment the wind began to sob and sough without; the sea grew hoarser below, and there was less mirth in the hall; for the signals of fate, which were known there, were duly revered, and all prank and pastime was interdicted till it was ascertained what heed the Chief would give to the omens.

Among other things which Roderick had thought necessary to the rank of life to which he was called, was an assumption of the gentlemanly quality of free-thinking, while he stood in the utmost awe of every superstitious dogma. In consequence, his general reply to Elspeth was couched in no very ceremonious terms for her attempt to terrify him with her “ phusions,” while at the same time he felt a thrill of dread vibrate through every limb at her recital. But nothing more remarkable within the castle passed that night; the storm without was as if destruction were fetching his breath, and the roaring of the sea as an oracle that prophesied disasters; few or none went to sleep, and all were afoot by break of day, for in the pauses of the gale some heard the tolling of a bell, and the shrieks of mariners in jeopardy; nor were their fears ill-founded, when daylight appeared, the wreck of a vessel was discovered on the rocks.

Roderick himself at this spectacle seemed to leap out

Gael and the Sassenach

of his natural indolence, and for the time to be a new man. He ordered the hall fire to be heaped with peats, and the coals to be lighted afresh in the parlour; all was bustle, and he went himself to the shore to see what assistance could be given to the unfortunate souls whom he beheld clinging to the rigging and masts, amidst the showering spray of the breaking sea.

By this time the wind was abating, and the tide ebbing, so that the rescue of the ill-fated crew did not appear difficult; but ere the bark could be reached, it was found that several of the persons who had lashed themselves to the rigging, were already dead, particularly a lady and gentleman; their infant child, being below in the cabin with his nurse, was redeemed alive, with the master and several of the crew.

To do the Highland warmth of our friend Roderick justice, the best in the castle was not too good for the survivors, and in due time the dead were respectfully interred in the adjacent churchyard, while the orphan and nurse were committed to the care of "olden" Elspeth, and made as much of as their melancholy circumstances could draw from kind hearts accustomed to set no bounds to their hospitality.

When the Chieftain had ascertained from the master of the vessel, that the father and mother of the child were English voyagers of great wealth, and were sailing on that wild part of the coast for pleasure, he thought it was expedient to take some early mode of conveying to their friends an account of the calamity. How to do

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

this properly was perplexing, for he was not very good at the writing, and as for spelling, he never could meet with a pen that was fit for the office; a whole afternoon he meditated on what should be done, and at last, on the suggestion of the master of the vessel, he resolved to apply to the minister, and to take his advice on the subject, saying—"If the Englishers be come, as you say, of a pedicree, we can do no less than make a moan for them."

CHAPTER II

No sooner had the Chief made up his mind to consult the minister of Strone, on the communication he should make to the world about the Englishers, than he seized his staff and went towards the manse.

This staff, we should by the way notice, was an Indian cane, virled with gold, and with an ivory top, such as became the palm of a Chieftain, and which our friend never made use of but with a flourish, that bespoke consciousness of his own consequence. With bonnet slightly doffed, contracted eyes, and lips apart displaying his grinders, he faced the blast with an upward look, daunting the northern wind that scowled in the black and wintry clouds which hovered in that air.

The path down the hill from the castle was not exceedingly well smoothed; the torrents of rain had in many places trenched it across; here and there huge stones lay on it, as if they had fallen from the skies, and its margin exhibited the freedom of nature. Neverthe-

Gael and the Sassenach

less, the Chief descended with rapid strides, and his shadow in the setting sun against the side of the hill, was like the giant with the seven-league boots, only his steps were greatly disproportioned.

When about half-way down to the manse, he met Pharick M'Gowl, his piper, and a proud man was Pharick, for he had been at the ferry-house, drinking with Monsieur Caprier, a dancing-master, who had been for some time professionally engaged in attempting to teach the young Highlanders of the neighbourhood to dance cotillions, instead of "the barbare reels," as he said that they were taught by the goats, greatly to the wrath and indignation of the old warriors. With him, as we have been saying, Pharick the piper had been drinking at the ferry-house; and the early part of the day being rainy, they somehow got into an argument, in which Pharick, being a little bleazy with liquor, had held out loud and long on the superiority of Highland civilisation above that of France; and the more he argued on this head, Monsieur grew the less and less able to refute him. At last he fell under the table, and Pharick, making the mountains echo to his drone and chanter, was coming up the hill, when Roderick was descending.

He looked at his Chief and master, to be sure that it was him, and wheeling round like the cock that, Milton says,

"Stately struts his dames before,"

blew out his bag till the echoes applauded again, and turning round, marched with a red face to the minister's.

Roderick was not displeased at this encounter; he had

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

that delicious glow upon his spirit which arises from the consciousness of having done his duty. So accordingly he flourished his cane, and shouldering it like a sword, stepped out after his piper whistling defiance, and really looked like a Chief.

In this guise the procession of the two proceeded to the manse, where learning from a breechless boy, that met them at the rude gate, that Dr Dozle was within, the piper paused, silence fell upon the hills, and the reverend gentleman was seen to look from the manse door with his old shoes down in the heels, his black breeches unbuttoned at the knees, and wearing a wrapper of his lady, that served him as well for a dressing-gown. But before the Chieftain reached the door, his reverence had retired within, and was ready to receive him a little more as became the patron of the parish.

Their mutual greeting was very cordial; the minister made an apology for his dishabille, having, as he said, got wet in attending the funeral.

“Ou aye,” said the Chief, “but we come on an instrumental our ainsel to accuse it with you, for Elspeth has cowpit the ink-pottle, and there’s not a pen in the house that can spell a mouthful of sense, petter than Nebuchadnezzar when he crunched grass with the cow.”

Dr Dozle, who knew how many blue beans it takes to make five, as well as most people of the ecclesiastical calling, joined very heartily in the facetious humour of the Chief, partly because he did not well understand what he said, and because he was a Highland patron,

Gael and the Sassenach

above whose stubborn humour he had long in vain struggled for masterdom; however he said—

“Come into the fire, M’Goul, and we’ll discuss that.”

“Discuss that, aye, aye, that was the word; but you know, Dr Tozle, that my parts were never brought out with a college learning like yours; now what do you tink, Dr Tozle, if we were to put twa lines in the newspaper, and they would gang from Dan to Beersheebea, telling of this melancholy—don’t you tink, Dr Tozle, it would be a very much to the purpose, umph? ”

The reverend doctor saw a little more into the Chief’s meaning by this sentence, and said that he was just in the act of writing to the Editor of the *Greenock Advertiser* a letter narrating all the sad circumstances of the wreck.

“Aye,” said the Chief, “you are a prophetess, and kest what I would be awanting when I came to my common sense concerning this molification; but, Dr Tozle, you’ll can read the scrapes of your pen, which is mair than ever I could do, our pens are so devillish; read, Dr Tozle.”

The doctor went into his study and brought forth the letter which he was in the act of writing, with the particulars of the calamity, to the Editor of the *Greenock Advertiser*, and read it to the Chief, who listened with open mouth to the whole story, giving at every pause a judicious hotch from the one side to the other, which showed that he understood it, and when the minister paused, he said, stretching out his hand, “Very well,

THE CHIEF ; OR, THE

Dr Tozle, very well indeed; you are a restinct man, al true, al true; but you might have said a little more of the civilities to the dead corpses, that we had to cut out of the rigging, and how Elspeth had made a dauty of the bairn that we eschewed in the cabin."

" Oh," replied the doctor, " I had not finished; all that was to come, and I could never have forgot the rescue of the unhappy child; all we have now left is to find out its parentage."

" Aye, Dr Tozle, and you should have precluded with a smalloch hone, just by way of an edification."

" You are very right," said the doctor, " it is much to be lamented, M'Goul, that you were not brought sooner to the estate; talents such as yours ought not to be hid under a bushel."

" What you say, Dr Tozle," replied the Chieftain, "is very true; I had a spunk within me, but it has gone out like the snuff of a cruizie; put as I am here, and came on purpose, I would just like to hear the preclusion of your letter, for by all accounts the Englishers were grantees, and I would have all the particulars set down."

" They need long spoons that sup with the deil," replied the minister jocularly; " there's not the like of you, M'Goul, with parts so like a natural, in three counties. I'll just step into my study and conclude the letter, for Rob Walker, that carries the post, will be here soon."

The Chief, highly pleased with himself, and the commendations which his parts had received, sat in the parlour while the minister stepped out to finish the letter.

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

In the meantime the mistress came into the room, and essayed to entertain M'Goul, saying—

“ Hech, sirs, but the hand of the Lord was in it.”

“ Aye,” said he, “ and so was the hand of M'Goul, for it would have been a plack story an he had na peen there.”

“ Deed,” said she, “ the minister has been telling me that at the break of day ye came forth like an angel of darkness, and great help ye were of to the dead.”

“ Matam, mem, we did put our duty; och hone, it was a sore sight; but you know, my goot matam, that the heavens delight in calamities, and we must pend the head and opey.”

At this crisis the reverend doctor came from his study with his letter completed, and read to the Chief what he had added, which was quite agreeable to his delicate taste, for it bestowed high seasoned praise on his hospitable humanity to the survivors.

“ Now,” said M'Goul, “ that's what I call to the crisis of the pisiness; and we shall hear by and by of this, for if it be as the skipper of the park cognosces, there will be an inquest, and me and you will get our adjudications for it, and now that I have got the letter ready, I will measure my way up the hill to my own castle, which is not out of the way for reparation; three sclates from the west towersock were blown off in the gale, and a steep of wet comes in where they were, and has made my bed just all a sappy middin, and I am like a grumphy. Mistress Tozle, hae ye ony thing in your pottle,

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

for I have a doubt that some thing o'er cauld is meddling with my inside? "

" Oh! " cried the lady, " what have I been about, not to offer you, M'Goul, something before? the best I have is at your command."

" Aye, put dinna give me your plue mould biscuits, nor your loafs of the auld warld from Inverary; I'll just take a scrap of cake, and I like the crown of the farle."

The minister's wife was not long of fetching the whisky gardevin, with a glass and piece of bread, with which M'Goul helped himself, shaking his head and spluttering with his lips as he drank the whisky, saying, with a droll look,

" Ech, Mrs Tozle, but that water of yours is cauld, but it's no ill to take."

With that he rose, and giving a wave with his staff to the piper, who waited for him at the gate, he went back in order as befitted the honour of Inverstrone.

CHAPTER III

When the paper trumpet of Greenock, yclept the Advertiser, had conveyed to the uttermost parts of the kingdom the sad intelligence which Dr Dozle's letter communicated, there was, of course, great sorrow awakened in many places, but that which it occasioned in the mansion of Richard Stukeley, Esq., of Fenny Park, heretofore sheriff of the county of Wessex, we may be excused from attempting to describe. The old gentle-

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

man was the father of the unfortunate victim of the shipwreck, and had, with reluctance, consented to his son and family undertaking that voyage to the north-west of Scotland, which had terminated so fatally; but the infirm state of the lady's health, and the exhortations of the doctors, had prevailed in spite of the presentiment with which he was affected, and he saw them set out with a heaviness of heart that persuaded him they would never return.

When he received the sad news, he despatched an old confidential servant to bring the child and nurse from Scotland, and to present the best expressions of his gratitude to the *Lord* of Inverstrone, all which was executed in order; but the M'Goul was taught to expect some more substantial testimony of the service he had rendered. Not that the idea of reward had entered, of its own accord, into his head, for he had too much of the Celtic blood in his body to be guilty of so sordid a thought; but the visitors whom the calamity drew to his castle, when they heard of the opulent family with which the deceased were connected, had so congratulated our friend Roderick on his good luck, that he began to say—

“To be surely, there would be a penefit in meal or malt to him in the goot time.”

When the servant sent for the orphan appeared at the castle, he soon learned that something better than thanks was expected by the retainers, and forseen in the dreams of Elspeth. Thus it happened, that Rich-

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

ard Woodstock, the servant, when he returned to his master with the child and its nurse, reported among other things this expectation, and old Mr Stukeley, still under the sorrow of the event, was not obtuse in receiving the hint. As soon, therefore, as he had embraced the child, he wrote himself to the M'Goul, not only a repetition of his thanks, but lamented that distance and age prevented him from cultivating that personal friendship which sorrow and misfortune had hallowed to him for the remainder of his life.

To this letter he received a most becoming answer from the Chief: it is not necessary to conjecture whether it was penned by Dr Dozle or the parish schoolmaster, but it bore in large, legible, permanent, and conspicuous characters, the subscription of Inverstrone himself, in words at length, and concluded with—that, in the fall of the year, he proposed to visit England, and would do himself the particular pleasure of paying his respects, as was familiarly said, “ to old Fenny Park.”

Mr Stukeley, who, in his younger years, had been bred in London, and had there made his affluent fortune as a draper, was rather surprised at the style of condescension and freedom which pervaded this epistle; but he ascribed it to the manners of the Highlanders, of whose peculiarities he had heard something when in business, and took it kind to be so suddenly recognised as an intimate friend by any chieftain of a race whom he had been taught to regard as among the lordliest of mankind.

The letter from the M'Goul was in consequence re-

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

ceived as something of an honour, that tended to lessen the greatness of the calamity that led to it. The death of the son and his wife was in consequence mitigated by the expected visitation of the Highland Chief. We are bound by the insight vouchsafed to us of human nature, to let this much be known; for Providence so variously turns the ills of life, that out of trifles light as air, sweet consolation is often distilled.

An answer to the Chieftain's epistle was sent in course of post, expressing Mr Stukeley's mournful pleasure in the prospect of so soon shaking hands with one to whose feeling heart he was so much obliged, and entreating that he would spend the winter at Fenny Park.

"I cannot offer you now," said he, "such a cheerful home as it once was, but all that is in my power to give will be freely bestowed."

There was, to be sure, a little of the inflation of a prosperous Londoner in the style of his reply; but at Inverstrone it diffused universal satisfaction: old Elspeth saw in it the realization of her wishes; the chief said he would not take a five thousand pounds in Perth bank notes for the gift in store; and Dr Dozle, who was sent for to read the letter more distinctly, in order that there might be no mistake, told the M'Goul it was a plain assurance that his fortune was now made.

Elspeth was instructed to prepare the Chieftain's necessities for the journey. It was, however, late in the evening when she received her orders, and therefore it was not asking too much time for consideration, that the

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

old woman did nothing in the business of packing that night, but in the morning she began at an early hour, and selected two large chests for the occasion—one to hold provisions for the journey, and the other as a receptacle for the paraphernalia—and inasmuch as food is more essential than raiment, she determined on filling the former first.

But the ploy was too precious to be executed without the superintendence of M'Goul himself; and accordingly after breakfast, he came into the apartment where the old woman was busy.

“Hoot, toot,” cried he, as he entered, seeing her labouring on her knees, amidst mutton-hams, white puddings, salt fish, and half a cheese, with smoking bannocks baked that morning for the occasion, “this is not the ceremony at all,” said he; “we must have the utensil with hair, for we’re a gentleman, and puddings of cows, and legs of sheep, are not relishing at all—hoot, toot, toot; all you have to do, my goot woman, is to have a needful to serve till we get to Glasgow, and then the M'Goul will go as the M'Goul should.” The hairy utensil was a trunk, which, on being declared heir to the estate, our friend Roderick had bought second-hand at Fort-William, and thought it a grand thing, and would mark his degree among the Englishers. However, after some altercation, half Gaelic, half English—for Elspeth, by her long residence in the Lowlands, had forgotten her native language—matters were put to rights; and in due time, with a bundle tied in a handker-

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

chief, and the trunk on the shoulder of a stout Highlander, the Chief, on a sheltie, took his departure for the south; Pharick the piper, strutting in advance, making the mountains doleful with "Lochaber no more." Dr Dozle, and his wife holding him by the arm, were out at the gate of the manse to view the procession, and many were the benedictions with which they saluted the proud Chieftain as he passed.

Of the M'Goul's progress to Glasgow we forbear to speak: it was worthy of him, and of the civilized portion of the region through which it was made. As far as Balloch ferry, the transit of Venus over the sun, as beheld by the French philosophers, was a dim unnoticed spot compared to the cometic luminary of his advance. It was, however, late in the evening before he reached the Tron-gate of Glasgow; the lamps and shops were lighted up, and he remarked to the ghillie with the trunk on his shoulder, who was also his servant, and had been a soldier in a Highland regiment, "that he had never seen so big a toun in al his life, with such a confabulation of candles and cruises that were a pleasantry to see."

Donald, who was more rogue than fool, told him that the illuminations were all on account of the chief of the Clan Jamphrey, and it behoved him to take some notice of the compliment; whereupon Pharick the piper was ordered to put his drone in order, and play up "The garb of Old Gaul;" the Chief himself bore his bonnet aloft, and in this order they proceeded along Argyle Street, towards the Black Bull Inn, startling the natives with

"The outrageous insolence of pipes."

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

CHAPTER IV

This was not only the first time that the Chief of the Clan Jamphrey had been in Glasgow, but the first time he had entered an inn in which the smell of peat-reek and train-oil did not predominate. We may, therefore, conceive his amazement at the splendour which broke upon his vision when he entered the Black Bull; a house which he often afterwards said was as pretty a kingdom of heaven on the face of the earth, as a man could take half a mutchkin in upon a drop-on-the-nose day.

He trusted a good deal to the experience of Donald his servant, who had seen, as he said, the outer side of the world, and who was his guide on this occasion to the regions of the South. Donald, as we have already mentioned, more rogue than fool, though hired for the occasion, saw through the Chief's peculiarities, and had some enjoyment in bringing them out; but, like a true Highlander, his master's pride could be in no more jealous custody; no man in his hearing durst say aught in disparagement of his redoubtable Chieftain, and if he now and then laughed in his sleeve at his odd conceits and extravagant self-importance, it was but a custom he had learned from the Southrons in the army.

Donald told the waiter on their arrival that the best room in the house was not too good for the M'Goul, and ordered a savoury supper to be set out for him immediately, as he had come from Luss that day, and stood in need of refreshment. Accordingly, without having occasion

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

to utter more than a grunt of approbation, they were shown into a parlour, where presently the waiter began to lay the cloth for supper, Roderick walking about the room in the meantime, flourishing his stick, and affecting to be as much at gentlemanly ease as the Dean of Guild of a borough town in the presence of King George the Fourth, at his ever memorable reception in Holyrood House.

Supper consisted of the usual delicacies of the season; among other things was a plate of eggs in cups of mahogany, with a radiance of bone or ivory spoons surrounding the dish in which they were served.

The moment that the Chief saw this phenomenon, he made a dead point at it, but a certain *mauvaise honte* prevented him from asking the waiter to explain. He had heard, however, of the usages of inns, and calling aloud for a bottle of Port (meaning porter), Mr Towel-under-arm skipped out of the room as a Highland deer would from his lair on the mountains, and Donald the servant being left alone in attendance, the amazed Chieftain said to him—

“ Well, Tonal, what can they round wee white things be, in the tawny dram glasses of timber? ”

Donald looked at them carefully, and said, “ That surely they were shell-fish.”

“ You may say so, Donald, but they are neither lam-pets nor clockidoos, though I must say that they have a look for whiteness, of cockles; ou aye, they’re just cockles of a Lowland breed.”

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

Donald said that M'Goul might try them, but he was sure they were not cockles.

The Chief stretched forth his hand, and seizing one of the egg cups, drew it towards him, gave the egg a great blow with the butt of a knife, which caused it to splash up in his face.

"Goot Got, Tonald," cried he, "it's a caller egg, tamn it, whether or no."

But further colloquy was spared; for while he was wiping his face, the waiter came in with the wine in a decanter.

"My Got," cried the laird, "if that's no Port o' Port, or a dark bruist very like it."

In the meantime, Donald had inquired aside, about the coach to Edinburgh, and learnt from the waiter that it set off that same evening at ten o'clock. This news, after the waiter had withdrawn the cloth, he communicated to his master; and it was agreed that they, piper and all, instead of staying for the night in Glasgow, should set off at once for Edinburgh by the mail, and Donald was ordered to summon the waiter, to tell him of M'Goul's determination.

The waiter received the order with great complacency, and inquired what number of seats he would be pleased to secure in the coach.

"Oh! the whole tot of them," cried the M'Goul; "it's no every taw the M'Goul goes to the Lowlands."

The waiter, without shewing any particular mutation of physiognomy, went to the office, and ordered, as directed, the whole inside to be secured for the Highland

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

gentleman and his tail; which was scarcely done, when Mr Paction the writer came into the office, and besought a place, as he was summoned to attend a meeting of counsel next morning, but the clerk declined to receive his money without the consent of the Chief, who, when the waiter went to him to solicit permission for Mr Paction, assumed a very bluff and indignant visage.

“ No, py Got, he shall not offer for to go with the M’Goul—umph! a bit swatcher of a writer—umph! set him up to go with the M’Goul in a coach—umph! tell him to go, and be tanned too, in the bottom of the Red Sea.”

The waiter, however, none daunted, returned to the office, and told Mr Paction he might still go with the coach as an outside passenger, for the Highland gentleman had said nothing about that.

“ Oh! very well,” said Mr Paction, “ I will take the outside, and trust to being permitted before the journey is half over, to take an inside place.”

Thus it came to pass, that at the hour when the coach started, M’Goul, Pharick, and Donald his man, stepped into the inside of the mail, and Mr Paction, with a good comforter about his neck, and his great-coat well buttoned, mounted on the roof.

The guard happened to belong to the Clan-Jamphrey, and exulting that he had his Chieftain on board, fired his pistols, as in days of yore, and blew a blast both loud and shrill, as the coach hurled down the Gallowgate.

“ What’s that? ” cried the Chief to Donald, when he heard the pistols crack.

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

“ Oh,” said Donald, “ it’s Hector Macgregor, the guard: he was a soldier in ours, and me and him had a caulker together for auld lang syne, and for your honour’s journey to London.”

“ Umph,” said the Chief.

Then the bugle took up the admonitory strain, and the Chief said, “ Tonal, whatna too-tooing’s that? ”

“ Oh!” said the man knavishly, “ it’s to let the peoples know who is going to Edinburgh.”

“ Umph,” cried the Chief; adding, “ well, there’s some jocose flirtation in a great man like me travelling over the hills and far awa in these brutalised places.”

At this crisis, a shower, which had been all the evening lurking in a lowering cloud, began to spit out a little, rendering Mr Paction on the outside rather uncomfortable; and the Cheftain within, who, with his attendants, being little acquainted with pulling up the windows, was no better. In this dilemma he applied to Donald.

“ Have you preath of life, Tonal, for the ill-pred weather is spitting in my face. Good Got! Tonal, it’s raining like a watering can, and treating me no better than if I was a hesp of yarn pleaching for old Elspeth.”

Donald told him, however, that there was a way of closing the windows, if he only knew how; and proposed that they should stop the coach, and request Hector Macgregor to do it.

“ Whist, whist,” cried the M’Goul, “ that would be to make a peachment of ourselves, telling them we did

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

not know how to close a coach-window, never having been in a mail before."

The rain, however, was a hard-hearted shower, and the Chief was no better, in consequence of the open windows, than Mr Paction on the outside, which very much surprised the piper, who, with Donald, sitting with their backs to the horses, felt not the weather.

At last the coach stopped, the door opened, and Mr Paction, dripping wet, attempted to jump in, at which the M'Goul stretched forth both his hands, and with a desperate push, drove the writer on the broad of his back on the road, and cried—

"Umph, my Got, he is a robberman; put I'll crack the sowl out of his body."

And to all the intercessions of the guard and coachman, he was resolved that "No writer, py Got—umph, should put his claw in a box with a Chief."

So Mr Paction was obliged again to mount on the outside, and proceed, exposed to all the contumely of the inclement weather, till they arrived at the next stage; here he jumped down—was as quickly at the fire-side—and ordered as abruptly a dram; the Chief, too, with his tail, alighted, and went also to partake the blandishments of the kitchen-fire, which the boisterous night, and the lateness of the hour, kindly commended.

Mr Paction, very little appeased with the treatment he had received, drank his dram without noticing the M'Goul at all.

The Chief, equally regardless, placed himself by the

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

fire in an arm-chair, and taking off his shoes, deliberately placed them within the fender, and began to warm his toes, but scarcely had he done this when the guard sounded his horn, and gave note that all was ready. Mr Paction mounted aloft, as before, and the Laird and his tail were obliged to run as fast as possible, he huddling up his kilt, and Pharick the piper carrying the shoes which he had not time to replace.

Thus he was compelled to sit out the remainder of the journey with wet feet, for the road between the door and the coach was, as he said—

“ All crawling with mires.”

Nothing happened worthy of notice till they were near Edinburgh. Looking out, he said to Donald that they would go at once to the ship, for he was as cold as a salmon, and it was overly-early to expect Christianity in any tavern in Edinburgh.

Accordingly, when the coach stopped at the Black Bull, at the head of Leith Walk, Mr Paction had the felicity of seeing the Chieftain, with his piper and his man Donald, walk away with their hairy utensil, in the showery morning, to the pier of Leith, where the smack they intended to go by to London was lying.

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

CHAPTER V

When the M'Goul reached the pier of Leith, it was in the grey of a misty dawn, or, as it would have been called in England, a showery morning. Steam vessels had then been of recent invention, and the one in which he, with his tail, proposed to embark, was to sail that day. The boiler was, in consequence, awake, and hissing from the mast-head; but, as the Chief said, "there was not another mother's son mudging in the vesshell." This obliged him, with Pharick the piper, and Donald the man, to walk the decks, exposed to all the vicissitudes of the weather, till it pleased one of the men, after they were drenched to the skin, to look up from a hatchway and inquire what they wanted.

"Is this al your shivility?" cried the angry Chief. "Don't you feel what we want, umph? We want a dry."

"A dry," said the sailor, either pawkily, or in simplicity, "there is not such a thing here."

"Good Got!" cried the Chief, addressing himself to Donald, "isn't that moving, umph?"

However the mariner, or engineer, or whatever he was, by this time had ascended on deck, and opened the cabin companion, telling his preternatural visitors that they might go below, to shelter themselves from the rain.

"Ay, and we will too," cried the indignant Chief; and, followed by his attendants, he descended the companion stairs into the cabin.

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

At first he paused, evidently surprised at the magnificence of the room, and turning round, he inquired if this was the ship which King Shorge came in, and without waiting for an answer, he stepped forward and sat down on a sofa; and taking off his plaid, said, " We are al a tripping roast."

" Aye, we are tripping," replied Donald, coolly.

Having disposed of his bonnet and plaid, our hero laid aside his sword, and took off his brogues, looking at his feet, which were not yet rid of the " mires; " but he said nothing, except " umph," adding, after a pause,

" A wee writer—umph—the M'Goul knew better than to let such a neat sit by him, umph."

As none of the party had enjoyed any repose since they left the inn at Luss, at break of day the preceding morning, they soon began to feel drowsy. Pharick the piper, notwithstanding his damp garments, sat down in a chair, stretching out his legs and arms, courted not in vain the embraces of Morpheus. Donald the man, an old soldier, was a little more select. In seeking for a couch, he saw in a corner a sail loosely turned up, and fixed on it; but he had been too cursory in his inspection, for, not very accurately observing, he threw himself down like a fatigued dog, and in the very instant a cat and five kittens fixed their teeth and claws in his kilted thigh, which made him instantly start, with the whole family and the exasperated mother dangling at his philabeg. Even the Chief deigned to smile, and said, with a pun that would have done credit to a wit of

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

the Trongate, " Hech, Tonal'd, but ye have soon met with a catestroffy! "

Donald, however, had learned, among other tricks of the service, many expedients. He shook off the feline malcontents, and usurped their dormitory.

The M'Goul himself, who felt it below his dignity to appear in need of repose, did not immediately change his position. But, by and by, he caught the infection of their snores, and began to yawn for a place of rest; but he looked around for a bed in vain. At last he observed one of the tables very alluringly spread, and on it a bundle that would make an excellent pillow. Accordingly, he mounted upon it, and laid himself out for sleep, somewhat in the style of St Andrew on the cross, but his front downwards.

How long the party had thus enjoyed a temporary oblivion from all their sufferings, we do not exactly know; but while thus asleep, two students of medicine, who intended to walk the hospitals in London during the winter, came on board to select berths, and on going into the cabin, they saw the Celtic party. Donald was so cuddled up that they did not disturb him; and Pharrick, the piper, happened to be in a Christian position, for which he was spared. The M'Goul opened his eyes, and giving a great snore, went to sleep again, as they entered. This was more than the two young doctors could withstand.

" He is dead," said one to the other, " or dying. Let us Burke him."

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

They did not confine themselves to jeers, but encouraged by his unprotected position, they attempted some practical jokes, which instantaneously awoke the chief, and he pursued them in such a whirlwind of passion that they were glad to escape, and thereby baulked the "James Watt" that voyage of two passengers.

Soon after, the other passengers came on board; and our Celtic friend was appeased by the bustle and hilarity with which the vessel got under weigh. By the time he had partaken of some repast, and as they were paddling merrily down the Frith, Donald had conducted Pharick to the servants' cabin, taking care to let it be well known in the ship that their master was no other than the M'Goul of Inverstrone, in the Western Highlands.

This news soon spread among the inmates of the vessel, and young and old, with all degrees of Edinburgh lawyers, and men who had been shooting in the Highlands, regarded with awe and apprehension the redoubtable Chief, as he doft his bonnet on the one side, and flourished his cane majestically as he walked the deck. But notwithstanding all his bravery, the sad sea influences were at work within him; and, in the very act of shouting for his man Donald, instead of words, all the scraps and crumbs of which he had so lately partaken were poured forth. He was suddenly smitten with a sore seasickness, insomuch that he rather fell than sat on one of the benches crying—"Good Got! Och hon! I'll die! I'll fever and die immediately!"

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

Whether Donald and Pharick were in the same condition we have not heard; but the wind began to blow, and the Chief began to spout as the vessel stood more and more to sea. At last Donald, pale and woebegone, came to his assistance, and inquired if he could in any way serve him.

“By Got!” cried the Chief, “I am a dying man. Stop the vessel—by Got, stop her, or my entrails will pe in Abraham’s bosom!”

“How can I stop her,” cried Donald, with something like a sardonic grin, “when a man with a big stick is kittling her up behind?”

To this sapient reply the Chieftain could only utter an interjection of despair; but towards the evening he grew better, and the wind freshening, the steamer ploughed the waves at a noble rate. All those who had felt the spell of the ocean, and confessed its power, began to stir with new life; and the M’Goul, recovering from his affliction, like the Spring in Thomson’s Seasons—

“looked out and smiled.”

In the evening of the second day the steamer entered the Thames; and exactly at forty-nine hours and seventeen minutes, she came to her anchorage at Blackwall. But what befell our friend in London is matter for another chapter.

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

CHAPTER VI

Among the resuscitations which happened on board the steamer after she entered the smooth waters of the Thames, and was cheerily paddling up the river, was that of Mr Jubal M'Allister, the writer, going on the celebrated appeal case of the firkin of butter, from the Court of Session to the House of Lords; and the first thing he did, after recovering from his internal controversy of the voyage, was to make an acquaintance with Roderick, the Chief, of whose greatness he had heard some account from the story which Donald, the man, had circulated on board the vessel.

His address in effecting this was inimitable. He saw the M'Goul looking towards the shore of the Thames, as if a pitiless northwest shower was exciting the muscles of his face; and going towards him, he stood by his side, and began to look to it also. Then he said in an interjectional manner, but loud enough to make the Chief hear him, "What a beautiful verdant country!" and turning round in a surprisingly modest manner, he remarked to the M'Goul that it was a delightful contrast to see the fields so green after their traverse on the blue ocean waters.

The Chief looked over his left shoulder, and seeing from whom the observation came, said, "Umph!"

So intellectual an interlocutor was highly gratifying to Mr M'Allister, and induced him still further to observe, with equal originality and pathos, that "England was a very fine country."

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

"Fine country!" said our friend, "I see no hills at al."

"Yes," said Mr M'Allister; "it wants but these to be a Paradise."

The Chief again looked at him over his shoulder, and replied "I would not give a snuff mull for a land without hills and heather; tamn it if I would."

"Certainly," said the lawyer, "heather mountains are romantic and beautiful in their proper place."

"You are a very shivilized gentleman," said Roderick, "and that testificates you have a nerve. What is the use of a country if it hasn't hills? Now, I would not give an old gill-stoup for one al green, only that it's goot for hay and black cattle."

Thus, from less to more, the ice being broke, Mr Jubal M'Allister and the M'Goul were jocose friends long before the "James Watt" reached her moorings; and lucky it was for the Chief that he had fallen in with so renowned a member of the blue and yellow fraternity, for he had come from his own castle of Inverstrone to the river of London without condescending to think that it was at all necessary to institute any inquiry relative to the metropolis. He had heard of many people going to London, but never of one who thought it necessary to inquire respecting the usages of the land. Mr M'Allister, however, set him right, and with great politeness offered to be of any use to him in his power before he went to Fenny Park; and being impressed with the importance of a Chieftain attended by his henchman and his piper, he thought he could do no less than

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

recommend him to take up his abode in the Clarendon Hotel, Bond Street.

"I hope," said the M'Goul, "it's a goot house—no sand crunching upon the floor, nor the rafters plack with peat reek."

"Oh," replied Mr M'Allister, "you will find yourself as comfortable in it as in your own castle."

"Umph," said the Chief, and mutteringly added, "that is no gratification, but we'll mend the sklate py and py."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," replied Mr M'Allister, "Inverstrone Castle is a very ancient pile."

"Ay, ay," said the Chief, "it was a castle—curse tak me if I know when."

Having landed, they proceeded, accompanied by Donald the man, Pharick the piper, and their other luggage, in a coach, to the Clarendon Hotel, where they were ushered in due order into a suite of apartments, the elegance of which so fascinated our hero, that he walked about in the sitting room, flourishing his cane and whistling "the White Cockade," not believing it possible that he was then in a public-house. However, the state of his appetite, reminded him of the circumstance, and with his wonted hospitality, he requested the Edinburgh lawyer to ask the waiter to bring something to eat, "for," said he, as an apology for being daunted at his smart appearance, "you know the gentleman may not understand my English language."

Mr M'Allister did as he was desired, and took the opportunity of giving the orders, to let the waiter know

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

the rank and greatness of the guest; accordingly, while spreading the table with some refreshment, the lad, never having seen a kilted Chieftain before, with a diffident air inquired at M'Goul, what he would be pleased to order for his attendants.

"Oh," said the Chief, "give them a bit of salmon, with moorfowl, and anything."

Which the waiter, making him a lowly bow, immediately went to execute, and afterwards returned into the room followed by Donald and Pharick. The former not being much accustomed to waiting at table, posted himself with his sword drawn erect as a sentinel at the door, while the latter, during the repast, regaled them with divers melodious pibrochs. It was evident from the appearance of the different waiters who came into the room, that, accustomed as they are at the Clarendon to extraordinary visitors, they had never seen such a one before. Mr M'Allister was also a little awed by the scene, but he soon recovered his self-possession, and accidentally learning that the Chief had not informed Mr Stukely of his intended avatar, undertook to do so, in order that the reception of a Chief might be suitable to his station, "For," said he to Roderick, "it will never do for one of your consequence to go in upon him without warning; it is required by your rank that you should go in a proper manner, for the English do not know what a Chief is."

"Ou ay," said the M'Goul, "I am a consequential man; the M'Goul, py Got, is the M'Goul al the world over."

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

Accordingly a letter from Mr Jubal M'Allister himself was written to Mr Stukely of Fenny Park, enclosed in an envelope, and sealed with the Chieftain's large seal of arms, displaying of course the supporters, and was sent to the post office. This circumstance, in itself not particularly important, occasioned much speculation at the mansion of the quondam sheriff. It was received as a communication from an archduke or an emperor; the manner in which the letter was made up, shewed that it was written by a person well skilled in the diplomatic art, and the seal betokened the pride, pomp, and circumstance of chieftainship; moreover, as great men are not good at writing, it was written from the Chieftain by what was deemed one of his suite. Great bustle in consequence ensued; the best bedroom was put in order, and suitable apartments for the Chieftain's attendants. All the neighbouring gentry who had newly come into the country were invited to dine with him, and nothing was heard of from the turnpike gate to the alehouse, but the grandeur and glory of the approaching visitor.

In the meantime, Mr Jubal M'Allister having safely left the Chief and his tail at the Clarendon, retired to his accustomed haunt in Holme's Hotel in Parliament Street. There he made himself an object of envy, by rehearsing to his compeers from the Parliament House, with whom he had been associating, and where he had been interspersing his recital with barbaric pearl and gold, and affecting mightily to laugh at the uncouthness of the Chief, while in the core of his heart he felt an in-

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

expressible glow of reflection, and an augmentation of importance. But, as our narration comparatively has little respect towards him, we shall not enlarge on this topic, but return to the M'Goul, the more immediate object of our worship, who, in due time, with Donald and Pharick, went to sleep; and by his felicitations in the morning, it appeared that he had never passed so comfortable a night. At first it was his intention to have gone at once from London to Fenny Park, but Mr M'Allister had taught him to understand that a proceeding of this kind was an unbecoming familiarity that ought not to be practised towards such new-made gentlemen as he understood Mr Stukely was; and in consequence, in announcing his arrival at the Clarendon Hotel, intimation was given that he would, as soon as possible, not fail to pay his respects at Fenny Park. The exact day was not specified, that time might be allowed to prepare for his reception, and also that he might see something of the metropolis before he went thither.

CHAPTER VII

Early after breakfast, Jubal M'Allister waited on the Chief, whom he found sitting in great pomp, listening to his piper Pharick, strutting outrageously at the other end of the room. He was received with a shout of gladness, for the Chieftain, notwithstanding the vast numbers of the Clan Jamphrey in London, knew not where to find in all that great metropolis one of his kith or

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

kin. Donald, his man, had asked leave to go to Chelsea, where some of his old chums were settled in legless or armless dignity for life. Pharick and himself, having a little stronger the flavour Celvatic, remained in the house. Perhaps as Pharick spoke only Gaelic, there was some prudence in this resolution; but his Chief and master was, we are sorry to confess, something akin to being afraid; fear of man was not in his nature, but of a town he stood much in awe.

When the Edinburgh lawyer had taken his seat, the Chief, with an emphatic wave of his hand, signified to Pharick that they were content with his music for the present, and turning to the writer, he began to give him an account of his entertainment and opinion of the Clarendon Hotel.

“It is,” said he, “a pra house, and he would pe no petter than a Fandal from high Germanie, who would say it was a common public; and then they have wine, both portaport and sherries, that to drink would make you pounce, al which we made our revels with, and then went to ped.”

The lawyer having heard him out, then proposed, as he had time that day, to shew him the curiosities of the town.

“Ay,” said the Chief, “that is what we did portend;” and rising, began to move towards the bell. The man of statutes and precedents suddenly checked himself, as he saw him ring in the most natural manner possible, though it was only the third time he had ever tried it;

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

he pulled indeed a little longer and lustier than usual, saying at the same time, "that he had gatten an insight, for the gentleman had shewed him at breakfast that if he pulled the string, there would be sure of him or some other appearing at the door—just," said he, "as a salmon comes out of the water when you pluck the line."

But before Mr M'Allister had time to make any answer, the waiter appeared, and was informed the Chief was going out, and required his attendant to play before him.

"Gracious!" cried the astonished Edinburgh lawyer, "we would only raise a crowd in London." But warily checking the expostulation, and adapting his phraseology to the understanding of the Chief, he said that the Londoners were not capable of estimating the merits of pipers; and, besides, the noises in the streets were so great that his melody wouldn't be properly heard. Pharick was in consequence ordered to bide at home, his master observing, after he had given the orders, "What you say, Mr M'Allister, is true; and surely for they have no knowledge of a musical here; and they made me as mad as a poiling kettle, after you went away last night, py a spring from a pair of pagpipes in a box on a man's back. Put I could make nothing of it, only I will say the pum of it was as melodious as a craw."

After this colloquy and description of the organ, the writer and the Chief sallied forth; and as they reached the turn of the street, where it enters Piccadilly, the Chieftain being in the Highland dress, paused and look-

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

ed round, on observing that he was himself "the observed of all observers." Mr M'Allister attributed his wonder to his first encountering a metropolitan crowd, especially when he saw him stretch himself erect, and look blandly around.

"They al know me," said the Chieftain; "but they are, I kess, of the lower orders, 'cause I know not a living soul of them—devil tak' me if I do."

They then proceeded down St James's Street, Mr M'Allister pointing out, as they went along, the different noted houses in that thoroughfare, with the palace of St James at the bottom. Club-houses were, however, beyond Roderick's comprehension, and he could only utter his national characteristic umph as they were severally pointed out. But the King's palace was something better adapted to his understanding, and he looked at it for a considerable time in silent cogitation, and then said, "Is that the King's own palace?"

"Yes," replied his guide; "the celebrated St James's."

"My Got! umph," cried the M'Goul; and giving his ivory-headed cane a flourish, turned eastward along Pall Mall, without uttering a word, or lifting his down-cast eyes on any edifice, public or private, that he passed.

When they had come to Charing Cross he recovered speech, and said, as they approached the statue (the improvements of the neighbourhood were not then made), "That's a King William, too," alluding to the statue he had passed at Glasgow.

Gael and the Sassenach

"No," said the lawyer, "that is King Charles, the monarch who lost his head."

"Goot Got! Charles Stuart, the great-grandfather of Prince Charlie."

And he lingered some time, gazing with mingled regrets and patriotism at the sight, till he happened to notice the lion on Northumberland House.

"Goot Got!" cried he, "whatna dog's that?" But presently he added, with ineffable contempt, "Pugh, it's but an effigy; does the man sell a good liquor there?"

By this time our Edinburgh acquaintance felt a little nervous, as in the course of the journey he had discovered that the Chief was wilder game than he had quite reckoned on, and felt somewhat apprehensive of meeting in those purlieus with some of his professional associates. Instead, therefore, of going down Whitehall, or towards the city, he turned round into Spring Gardens, and led the native into St James's Park, pointing out to him several objects which strangers deem curiosities; among others the telegraph on the Admiralty, the Horse Guards, and things of that sort; to all which, however, Roderick only gave a significant umph, remembering with mortification, the impression which the old tolbooth-looking building of St James's Palace had inspired. But when he came to the parade at the Horse Guards, he turned suddenly round, and looking with Celtic sagacity in the direction of the Palace, inquired, with an emphasis which shewed what was passing in his mind—

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

“ What is your opinion in a coorse of la concerning the Hanoverians, umph? ”

Mr M‘Allister being a Whig of the Stove school, as we have already intimated, replied—

“ No man now has any doubt about it; we have derived some advantages from them.”

“ Ah,” said the Chief, “ the tevil mean them to give justice and advantages; they have neither kith nor kin in the country like the auld Stuarts, umph!—That house, umph!—a Stuart wouldna put his meickle tae into it, umph ! ”

By this speech the advocate was reminded of the predilections of the Highlanders, especially of those who inhabited Moidart and its neighbourhood, and began to pull in his horns as they approached George’s gate, on their way to Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. When they came in sight of the former the Chief, giving a snort, said—

“ Ay, and is that auld kirk, and the young one at its fut, what they cal Wastmunster Abbey; and what’s to be seen in Wastmunster Abbey? ”

This was a flight beyond the imagination of the lawyer; it betrayed an ignorance of which he had no conception a Chieftain could be guilty, and he said, with ill-concealed mortification, that perhaps it would not be worth the seeing.

“ It’s very auld, I see,” said the Chieftain; “ nobody is alive now that saw it built, and of course cannot tell its history; so we’ll only hear a pack of lies about it,

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

just as I heard auld Ferryboat tell of the woman that beglamoured him at Roslin Castle, when he was called into Edinburgh to testify before the Lords that my father was the son of his own. No, I wouldna give that spittle out of my mouth to see it."

Considerably disconcerted at this declaration, the advocate hurried him across the street to the Houses of Parliament, and knowing that they were then up, felt a little more courageous, not having the fear of any of his companions before his eyes; but in the different houses and apartments Roderick took no interest, only he remarked in the House of Lords, looking at the throne—

"Ay, ay, the King may make a Lord, but he canna make a Highland Chieftain—curse take me if he can."

He then proposed to return and have a gill at the Clarendon, as it was a could day, and accordingly they walked back the road they had come; but on reaching Bond Street, the lawyer beheld every window open, filled with ladies, and a vast multitude in the street opposite the hotel, where Pharick was strutting up and down the pavement as proud as a provost, cracking the ears of the groundlings with a pibroch that his grandfather had played, to the inextinguishable horror of Prince Charles Edward when he landed at Moidart.

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

CHAPTER VIII

The advocate was by this time becoming a little alarmed; he saw that the habits of the Chieftain were not calculated for the meridian of London; and, moreover, he began to think that the Clarendon Hotel was not exactly the sort of lair which so wild a beast should frequent; and, therefore, although his vanity was interested in keeping him there, his Scottish prudence made him anxious to get him out of it, while yet his game flavour, though high, was odoriferous. Thus he began, after their return, to insinuate to the Chief that it was now time to be thinking of his visit to Mr Stukely, and said, " M'Goul, how long do you propose to stay at Fenny Park; because I think it will be better not to visit the curiosities of London until you return; for while you are there, you may hear of something worth seeing, that in our haste we would neglect? "

To this speech the Chieftain answered, " I have been thinking so too, for I see nothing at al in London just now that I would give a chucky-stane for a look; and really this town *more* is not just such a civilized place as a shentleman should be in; it's al shops and shopkeepers. Goot Got! and yon's St James's Palace! No wonder we had in the Highlands so warm a side to Prince Charlie, umph."

" I am glad to hear you say so," replied Mr M'Allister; " there is indeed a great difference between Edinburgh and London."

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

" I'll tell you al about it. Edinbrough has a caller air, which is a good health, but London has none at al; but as for my pheesit, it will just be till I have gotten the compliment that ould Fenny Parc has promised in his letter."

Mr M'Allister had learned by this time something of the story, and had guessed a little of the M'Goul's errand; not at all apprehending it rested on so slender a foundation, he said, with perfect sincerity, " How much do you expect? "

" That," said the Chieftain, " is all in ascurity; the minister, and he's a lang head, said it was worth a goot five thousand pound; but, Mr M'Allister, I am a moderate man, and I have been counting that I'll be very well paid with a three thousand, the which I will accept when he gives it. You see, Mr M'Allister, three thousand pounds would do very well, as I have been laying it out. First, you see, the castle, goot Got, she is a leaky material, and stands goot for five hundred. I'll have six bees' scaps for a policy on a farm before the door; they will cost a power of money. Elspeth tells me, that at Montrose, where she was, they cost more than three pound a-piece. But, Mr M'Allister, I will not make a parade to you of what I have laid out the three thousand pounds for, and expenses."

The advocate, pleased to be rid of the details, replied, " No doubt you will find a use for the money. M'Goul, you will want to be on your guard in bringing so large a sum to town."

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

“Ou aye,” said the Chief, “I have been making my calculations on that, and if you, Mr M’Allister, would condescend to help me, I would be greatly obliged.”

“Everything that I can do to serve the M’Goul, he may count upon; and before Parliament meets, as I have a few days’ spare time, I would advise you to make out your visit, and I will go with you.”

“Ah, that’s a goot creature! and if you’ll pe such a turtle-dove, I’ll go the morn’s morning.”

“Agreed,” said M’Allister; “and as you are not up to the way of London, leave the arrangements all to me.”

“Now,” said the Chieftain, “that’s what I cal hitting the nail on the head; take your own way.”

Accordingly the advocate ordered a post-chaise and four to be at the door betimes in the morning, and directed the bill to be made out by the hour of departure. All was done as he directed, but next day when the bill was presented, he was petrified to see the charge made for the servants, which, in addition to salmon at half a guinea the pound, and game in those days at as much a brace, with roast beef and plum pudding, ordered by Donald, consisted of every delicacy the house could afford.

“My God,” said he, “did you order the servants to be treated in this manner?”

“Oh, ay, I just, poor lads, desired them to get a butt of salmon and grouse—just the things, ye know well, they are used to at home.”

“Oh, very well, I have nothing to say to it; and as I

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

am more *au fait* to the ways of the English, I shall be purse-bearer, and settle for the bill in the meantime."

"You are a very condescending man, Mr M'Allister. Ay, just pay the paper, and we'll make a count and reckoning py and py."

Mr M'Allister, who had volunteered his services as purse-bearer, settled the bill, and they embarked in the carriage, the Chief and Mr M'Allister mounting inside; Pharick and Donald were already seated in their kilts on the bar outside. As soon as the Chieftain and the lawyer were seated, bang to went the door, smack went the whips, off went the chaise, and in starting, Pharick and Donald, by the laws of gravity, tumbled back, and the wind turned the skirts of their philabegs, as the chaise passed with increasing velocity up Bond Street, and along Oxford Street, to the amazement of the irreverent populace.

The Edinburgh lawyer was speechless, and did not know where to hide his face.

"Lads," said the Chieftain, "are you a seven wonder of the world, making yourselves Ben Nevis and Garry?"

One of the post-boys, an old man, hearing his voice, looked behind and exclaimed to his neighbour coolly, "Look Tom, I never seed an all my eye and Betty Martin afore."

Matters were, however, soon put to rights. Pharick and Donald recovered their position, the lawyer's terrors were appeased, and the Chief observed sedately that he had heard of accidents in post-chaises before.

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

When the party got out on the high-road, Mr M'Allister was so mulcted of his change by the turnpikes, that he was under the necessity of applying to the M'Goul for a few shillings, but the Chief had none in his pocket. All this confirmed our far-forecasting friend in opinion that a Chief who carried no money in his pocket must have a long purse; and acting on this persuasion he continued his liberality anew, by changing his own last guinea; but as they were to get three thousand pounds, it gave him no anxiety, especially as at this time they entered the gates of Fenny Park, and Pharick began to put his drone in order, which when done, they approached the house, he playing like desperation his Chief and master's favourite air, which had not certainly been composed by Dr Arne or Handel. The unmelodious notes drew all the household and the other guests to the door; and as if by instinct, and the coming sound of the pipes, the quondam sheriff came forth and received our hero at the portal. Great demonstrations of honour and welcome were made, in so much, without entering into the M'Goul's feeling, let it suffice to say that his companion, M'Allister, was infinitely delighted; and no wonder, for among the guests invited to meet the Chief, was an opulent biscuit-baker, retired from Wapping, who was to be, according to his lady, next week pricked for sheriff of the county; also a most warm slop-seller, who had bought the property of the old family of Oakes, a family that had been settled at Castle Grim, in the neighbourhood, since the conquest at least. Besides

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

them there was a sleeky tallow-chandler, who had made a sudden fortune by a speculation in Russia tallow. But it would be tedious to enumerate all the guests who came in their own carriages to meet the great Highland Chief, of whose coming Mr M'Allister had the preceding night thought it expedient to give Mr Stukely due notice, and was the cause, in consequence, of the distinguished reception which the M'Goul met with.

After the greetings and introductions were over, the chaise away, Pharick, like a turkey-cock strutting in the sun before the mansion, regaled the guests with a tune on his pipes, which they declared was most beautiful. But they then began to retire within doors, where Mrs Cracklings, the tallow-chandler's wife, inquired at Mr M'Allister, as she took his arm in ascending to the drawing-room, what was the name of the poor hanimal that the servant tickled and tortured in such a comical manner.

CHAPTER IX

Integrity is very inconvenient, notwithstanding the lawyers have endeavoured, by all means in their power, to establish a morality in which it should have no place. However, this is not the proper time for discussing that point; but as we wish to say a few sound and sober things interesting to this great commercial country, we could not hit upon a more pregnant apophthegm, especially as our observations refer to the company assembled at Fenny Park. Far is it from us and ours to give in to

159

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

the vulgar opinion that opulence alone is a monstrous poor thing; nothing can be more conducive to the glory of any people than the contrary sentiment. They indeed commit a solecism who maintain that those who have made their own fortunes are not as great among mankind as those of whom Providence has taken some pains in the making, or to whom old hereditary rank has been instrumental in giving refinement in manners and accomplishments in education, in addition to all the advantages which make the others purse-proud. But in a country like this, where the thrift of trade should be encouraged above all things, it is highly proper that successful drudging industry should be duly honoured, and raised to a level, at least, with talent and long descended riches.

The party at old Mr Stukely's, *ci-devant* sheriff, was of this description, and almost peculiar to the happy realm of England. The gentlemen had, by their patience and perseverance, and some of them by a magnanimous observance of our opening aphorism, raised themselves from a base condition to rank in their expenditure with the nobles of the land, and to buy them out in their ancient patrimonial inheritances. Their ladies had all the graces that would have been conspicuous in a low estate; we need not therefore say that a party so select was agreeable to our hero.

Mr M'Allister was at first highly pleased with the whole party. He ascertained that they had come all in their own carriages, which was a great thing in the eyes

Gael AND THE SASSENACH

of an Edinburgh lawyer; and that the least fortune of the gentlemen might be estimated at a plum, while the colloquial language of the ladies had something in it very racy and peculiar.

The same things did not increase the admiration of the M'Goul, but he was delighted to be surrounded by persons among whom he understood the Duke would have been but an ordinary man. It was true, that neither Mr Cracker the biscuit baker, nor Mr Cracklings the tallow-chandler, were chieftains; but he thought that this was more to be ascribed to Sassenach polity, than to any defect which he could perceive in their manners, their language, or their arrogance.

In due time dinner was served up; the ornamented table and "the costly piles of food" greatly exceeded any vision that had ever gratified the eyes of the M'Goul; and he remarked to the lady whose arm he had taken in descending to the dining-room, that it was "by Got, a feast petter than a wedding in the Highlands."

While knives and forks were busy, the conversation was general. The Chief maintained a becoming taciturnity, and Mr M'Allister entertained Mr Cracklings, who sat near him, with a full, true, and particular account of the hospitable boards of Edinburgh.

When the dinner was withdrawn, and the dessert placed on the table, and Mr M'Allister had remarked that toast-drinking had gone quite out of fashion, or made some other equally pertinent and philosophical stricture, the conversation became more desultory; in

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

the course of which, Mr Cracklings entertained our hero and the general company with a funny anecdote concerning a d——d exciseman that was poking his nose where an exciseman's nose should not be. What he said was exceedingly diverting—the company laughed loud and long, and Mr M'Allister declared that his sides were sore.

During the recital the Chief sat silent and solemn, because he scarcely understood a word of what Mr Crackling was telling; but when that gentleman made an end, turning round to him, he said—

“ I daresay, Mr M'Goul, you have no excisemen in your part of the country? ”

“ Ou,” replied he, without moving a muscle of his face, and with an air of the utmost indifference, “ they put one o' thae things till us, but we kilt it.”

The company were instantaneously struck dumb. Mr M'Allister remarked to Mrs Cracker, which she no doubt understood, that he never saw the sublime of contempt before.

Mr Cracklings immediately after said to the unconscious Chief—

“ Served him right.”

“ Umph! ” said the M'Goul.

Mr M'Allister then took up the strain, and told a story of an old woman who sold nappy ale at a roadside public-house, who, when a traveller said that it had an odd taste, “ It may be so,” quoth she, “ but the worst thing that goes into my barrel is the gauger's rod.”

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

From this disquisition concerning exerciseable articles Mr Cracker remarked on the state of the weather, some pattering of rain happening at that time to sound on the window, adding, that he pitied the poor who had such a comfortless prospect as the rising markets before them.

“ I don’t pity them at all,” said another gentleman who was present; “ haven’t they the parish and the workhouse? Don’t disturb yourself, my dear sir, on their account. In what country are the poor so well off as they are in England? Mr M’Goul,” said he, addressing the Chief, “ I’ve heard that you have no poor’s rates in Scotland—is that true? ”

“ Umph! ” said the Chieftain, “ poor’s rates! Are they shell-fish? We have no oysters.”

Not exactly understanding what he said, the gentleman, as if to make himself more intelligible, added—

“ What becomes of the poor with you? ”

“ Ou,” says the M’Goul, “ they all die.”

The ladies thought this a little too highly flavoured, and were moving to go away, but they were pressed to remain, both by Mr Cracker and Mr Cracklings.

Mr M’Allister, as an indemnification, then told them of the minister’s prayer, which he had been bursting to relate, reminded of it by the remark of Mr Cracker occasioned by the shower on the window; and accordingly he began mimicking an old Celtic minister, who was supplicating for weather suitable to gather in and barn the fruits of the earth. “ At this moment,” said the story-teller, “ a squally shower came blattering on the

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

windows of the church; the minister paused, and looked astonished; at last he sat down on the pulpit seat in despair, and cried out, ' Weel, weel, gude Lord, rain awa, and spoil all the poor folk's corn, and see what tou'll make by that.' "

But instead of the laugh which had gratified the advocate on former occasions, there was a solemn pause; and Mrs Cracker, his neighbour, said it was most pathetic, and she was sure, if rehearsed on the stage by Mr Kean or Mr Macready, there would not be a dry eye in the theatre.

But Mr M'Allister, instead of receiving this compliment as any tribute of respect to his powers of storytelling, inwardly thought the whole party very tasteless, and said to himself that it would be some time before he would be found casting his pearls before swine.

The ladies then withdrew, and the gentlemen closing ranks, Mr M'Allister gave old Mr Stukely a hint that he must let the M'Goul have as much claret as he chose. The table was accordingly abundantly supplied, but by and by the other guests separately went away, leaving only the landlord, Mr M'Allister, and the M'Goul, to whom the wine was as well water, to ply the decanters. The consequence was, that Mr Stukely, not accustomed to such potations, tumbled off his chair mortal, and was carried off by the servants. Mr M'Allister at this endeavoured to clap his hands, but the one went soundless and ineffectual past the other, which the Chief observing, gave a shout of triumph, and, rising up, snapped

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

his fingers victoriously, and taking hold of Mr M'Allister, dragged him, as it were, by the cuff of the neck to the drawing-room. But somehow the lawyer, peering and rosy as he was, escaped from his clutches, and with professional prudence sought his bed, while the M'Goul went to the ladies exulting, and walked up and down the drawing-room crying—

“ Py Got! py Got! ”

Then he sat down by Mrs Cracklings, and said to her, “ Goot Got, they thought to fill me fou, but Heighland blood knows betters; though I had been all claret wine to the very pung, by Got, he wasn't the M'Goul that would have been fou; curse take me if he would.”

CHAPTER X

Next morning the advocate, having recovered from the orgies of the preceding night, rose much in his usual; and when one of the servants brought the shaving-water into the room, he entered into conversation with him respecting the rank and consideration of the other guests. Thus he acquired a lever by which he knew that he could dislodge the Chief when he pleased; he had only to relate to him their professions, to make him feel how much they were beneath his consideration.

It accounted also to him, at least he thought so, for the silent manner in which his story was received, for his self-love was excoriated by it, and not all the wine which he afterwards drank could wash out the remem-

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

brance of the tragic comment; still, as the guests were possessed of great opulence, he had a kind of sinister reverence for them, and regarded the opportunity of cultivating their acquaintance as a sunshiny incident, and something to talk about when he returned home.

On descending to the breakfast-room he found the major part of the guests assembled, and the M'Goul talking to them as good as oracular responses. Old Mr Stukely was not present, the effects of his claret still confined him to bed; and while he remained there, it was not possible to talk with him of the Chief's expectation, or any other matter of business. The M'Goul himself did not altogether feel the propriety of the rule, but the advocate "instructed" that the modes of civilized life required an observance of the usage. After some time had elapsed, and Mr M'Allister had again made himself agreeable to Mrs Cracker, the biscuit baker's wife, who invited him to visit them at Piecrust-Hall, he walked out with the M'Goul, partly to wear the day away, and to talk more particularly than they had hitherto done, on the business which had brought the Chief to England. In the course of this perambulation he happened to remark that their visit would be more expensive than they apprehended; for with two servants, and the style in which they had come, they could not but give a handsome largess to Mr Stukely's household.

This intelligence was evidently not of the most pleasing kind to the M'Goul, for he gave an emphatic umph when he heard it, and changing colour, was apparently

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

in a pensive confusion long after. "But," said the advocate, "considering the sum you have to receive, this, however, must be overlooked."

"Umph," again said the Chief, who by this time began to doubt in his own mind if three thousand pounds would be the sum he would receive, and not being quite in his element, he began to talk of returning to London that evening.

"Indeed," said the advocate, "I am not surprised, M'Goul, to hear you say so, for, with all the shew of riches, these are vulgar people."

"My Got," said the Chief, "how do you know tat?"

M'Allister then related what he had learned with so much tact and delicacy in his conversation with the footman in the morning, and the alarming astonishment of the Chief increased.

"You don't shay," cried he, "that the shentleman tat was the lady's goodman peside you is no petter than Robin M'Crust, the penny-loaf baker at Inverstrone?"

"They are two of a trade," said the advocate.

"Tat's moving," cried the Chief; "and what commodity is the man Cracklings?"

"He, the servant told me, was the tallow-chandler in Whitechapel, one of the warmest men in London."

"Ay," cried the M'Goul, "he is very warm, for I saw the draps on his prow all the time he was eating his dinner, and was very pitiful; but Mr M'Allister, shurely, shurely yon fatty man has something more than a candle. We are poth, Mr M'Allister, in a jeopardy."

THE CHIEF; OR, THE

The trade of Mr Selvage, the slopseller from Wapping, puzzled even the Edinburgh lawyer to explain; and had he not been assisted in his conjectures by the Chief, they both might have remained to this hour in the dark.

“ A slopseller,” said Mr M’Allister, “ is, I apprehend, a victualler, or some other dealer in soaked articles, for we say a slop-basin, a pail of slops, and so on; but the precise nature of the business I don’t know.”

“ Ay, ay,” said the M’Goul, “ it’s a low trade, and that’s al we want to know.”

“ But, Mr Tinge, the drysalter,” said Mr M’Allister; “ his trade is a puzzler.”

“ Hoo, no,” said the Chief, “ it’s just making a mut-ton-ham without pickle. Put, my goot friend, we are in a trouble, like a flea in a tar-barrel in sheep-shearing; how will we get away? for if I had my monies I would not com among them for half an hour more.”

This was coming to the point; and after a long conversation it was agreed between them that the Chief should return to London as expeditiously as possible, and, to preserve his dignity, that Mr M’Allister should remain behind to receive payment of the debt which Mr Stukely owed, and return with a coach that passed in the evening. Accordingly, when they went to the house this arrangement was made known, and all affected the greatest grief at the intelligence, while their hearts leaped with joy. A carriage and four was in consequence in due time at the door, Pharick and Don-

GAEL AND THE SASSENACH

ald again mounted the cross-board, and Mr Stukely, notwithstanding his headache, rose to bid the Chief farewell. When this was done, the Chief was helped into the carriage, which presently drove away, Pharick playing a dolorous pibroch as they wended their way through the park. Far, however, they had not gone, when all those who had seen the Chief depart, returned into the house a little surprised, but saying nothing, on seeing that Mr M'Allister remained behind. He, however, was too good a man of business to summer and winter over his task, and accordingly he soon requested apart some private conversation with Mr Stukely; and that gentleman took him into another room, where the lawyer opened the colloquy, by saying, that he understood from the M'Goul that Mr Stukely was deeply in his debt.

"Yes," said the old gentleman, "it is a debt I can never pay."

"But," said Mr M'Allister, "you can advance part, and give security for the remainder."

"Sir," said the old gentleman, "what do you mean?"

"I am not instructed," replied M'Allister, "to abate much of the three thousand pounds."

Mr Stukely looked amazed, and exclaimed "Three thousand pounds!"

"Yes," said Mr M'Allister, "M'Goul thinks the debt amounts to about that sum."

"The debt!" cried Mr Stukely; "what debt?"

"That," replied Mr M'Allister, "which you owe him, and which to recover he has come all the way from the

THE CHIEF

North of Scotland. I hope, sir, the Chief will not be compelled to have recourse to steps in law to recover it."

"I owe him much," replied the old man, "a debt of gratitude I can never sufficiently pay."

"A debt of gratitude!" cried the lawyer; and beginning to suspect the truth, added, "that's a bad debt."

A mutual explanation then ensued, and the lawyer returned by the coach to London, highly exasperated to think he had been employed on such a gowk's errand.

Blackwood's Magazine, April-May 1833.

V
THE JOKE

THE JOKE

CHAPTER I

IN a county which there is no necessity for naming, lived a certain baronet, and in the county town, which we have the same reason for prudently concealing, dwelt a merchant. Both were, as a great poet says, “prosperous gentlemen;” and each of them had a son, companions in childhood, and, in riper years, as it is the subject of the subsequent pages to shew, sincerely attached friends. Of old Sir Robert Merrywell it is not necessary to speak, as will be presently seen; and it would be tedious to the courteous reader, were we more particular about Mr Bragly the merchant. Our story chiefly relates to their sons, and their progeny.

No two individuals could be more unlike than these two young men. The merchant’s son was plain in his manners, straightforward in his dispositions, very grave, and taciturn; the baronet’s heir was the reverse—full of waggery, prankful to all, very talkative, and gay to a proverb. With these qualities were united great warmth of heart and kindness, and it was a saying among the neighbours about him, that although he could not be believed, he was incapable of telling an untruth. It was his delight, in fact, to mystify every one about him; and yet he was greatly popular.

Between him and young Bragly the truest friendship existed; and it may be said, that although they were so

THE JOKE

dissimilar, the contrast in their characters enhanced their regard for each other.

In due time—rather early, indeed, for their years—the young men both married. Bragly's choice was a lady in every point the reverse of himself, gay, elegant, and witty. It was not conceived possible he would have made such a choice; but before the wonder had subsided, his friend also assumed the holy restraints of wedlock, by a still more extraordinary selection. We shall not attempt to describe the qualities of his sedate bride, but she was less likely to minister to his happiness, in the opinion of all that knew them, than even the gay and sparkling beauty was to Bragly. But the world was much mistaken; few were more happy; and an epithet which he employed to designate his better half is some proof of their mutual affection. He used to call her "my dumbie," and never could do enough to promote her quiet felicity.

In process of time the fathers of the young men proved the lot of humanity. Old Sir Robert died, and left to his blithe heir a rich inheritance. About the same time, old Mr Bragly became bankrupt; and before the twelve months expired, the ladies of the two sons departed this life, leaving behind two children. The baronet's was an infant daughter, and Bragly's an infant son.

This change in their condition would have led, no doubt, to some alteration in their way of life, had not the failure of the merchant rendered it inevitable. To make a short story in this part of our narrative, young

THE JOKE

Bragly resolved to go abroad, and pursue in other lands that fortune which had deserted him in this; and his friend the baronet insisted that he should leave his orphan son to be brought up by him, with the intention, in due time, of marrying him to his daughter.

The child being duly transferred for this purpose, the friends took leave of each other, and arranged the terms of a mutual correspondence. Thus all things went as well as could be desired; and therefore, having a great respect for the valuable time of our readers, we request them to conceive that a period of many years passed unmarked by any extraordinary event.

During the meantime the baronet's daughter grew up to womanhood, a beautiful and accomplished maiden, not so sprightly as her father, but of a gayer temperament than her mother had been; and young Bragly, who was destined to be her spouse, was, as her early companion, an object of particular attachment. With his characteristic drollery and love of the equivocal, the baronet brought up young Bragly in the soberest manner possible; he always treated him, it is true, as the son of his dearest friend, but he never lost an opportunity of reminding him of the blight that had fallen on his father's hopes.

Young Bragly, like the fair Elina, inherited the opposite qualities of his father and mother; but with a tincture of genius that elevated him far above others of his age. The facetious baronet saw his endowments with pride and pleasure, but affected to undervalue them,

THE JOKE

and to doubt that their great excellence was at all superior.

Among other things in which Rupert Bragly excelled was a predilection for drawing, in which, notwithstanding the gibes and jeers of the baronet, he made surprising proficiency; and being exhorted to improve his talent in the Academy of London, he persuaded his father's friend to grant him a moderate annuity to assist him in this purpose.

Sir Robert put on a grave face in granting the request, told him that painting was but a poor profession, and that he could not reasonably expect a great income from it. However, he promised something very moderate; at the same time he wrote, unknown to the young man, to a friend in London, to supply him with a large sum, but to look sharply after him, and, above all things, to take care that his liberality was not divulged.

Young Bragly, happy in being allowed to pursue the bent of his talents, took leave of the baronet with many expressions of gratitude, even while he regretted that he had been more contracted in his ostensible allowance than he had expected. His parting with Miss Merrywell, his old playmate, was more pathetic; a gentler and a warmer feeling than the confidence of youth had begun to rise in both their bosoms, but they knew not the quality of their mutual ardour, and ascribed it to their respective situations, and to the realisations of life and fortune.

Elina saw him depart a young adventurer, full of

THE JOKE

hope, and tempted forward by those allurements which seem so beautiful in perspective, but which shed their blooms even while the hand is stretched to pluck them. She grieved that he was gone, and she knew enough of the world to fear that a young man in his circumstances would never again return.

Bragly felt as much, but it was of a different strain; he was sorrowful and agitated when he bade her farewell: the meagreness of his fortune, however, convinced him that he had no other track to pursue. But full of a brave confidence in his powers, the pageantry of much splendid fancy gleamed before him; and a fond but vague anticipation of a happy return brightened the tears of adieu.

The baronet was mightily pleased with his stratagem; he saw in the parting an assurance that no difficulty would arise in the fulfilment of his intentions, and rubbed his hands with glee and gladness as often as he spoke of Bragly sowing, as he called it, his wild oats in London. Indeed, we scarcely can imagine a combination of human affairs, in which the pleasant so predominated; a little more acid was, perhaps, in the reflections of the young lady than in the thoughts of her father or young Bragly, but it enhanced the flavour, without being so acute as to give any pain.

THE JOKE

CHAPTER II

Rupert Bragly took up his abode in the neighbourhood of Somerset House, and was duly admitted a student of the Academy, at which he was a constant attendant, and attracted great notice by the originality of his manner, and the genius that scintillated in his sketches. But our task is not to follow his progress in the fine arts—that we must leave to more ingenious pens; the humbler labour we have undertaken consists in describing the temperate enterprises of real life. It is sufficient for our purpose to have mentioned his endowments and predilections, the state of his fortune, and the bias of his youthful heart.

The house where he took lodgings belonged to Mrs Kittle, a widow of a dealer in various articles, which, to save us from a more tedious description, we shall call huxteries. Her husband had left her in what for her station were good circumstances; and although she was of a certain age—namely, forty, or thereby—she was a comely woman, and of a blithe temper. Her native country was Scotland; but she had been so long in the metropolis, that she scarcely knew where it stood; and although she spoke Scotch with English words, she never could get the thistle entirely out of her mouth; for her father and mother spoke the language with classical purity, and were, to say the truth, like all their country-folks, very worthy good sort of people. The old man had in his day been a hard-working porter in Wapping;

THE JOKE

and her mother, a most bustling, creditable woman, kept for many years a shop of "a'things" in Ratcliffe Highway. However, we have but little to do with the pedigree of our countrywoman: it is enough to mention here, that in course of time she was married to Mr Kittle the huxter, whose good qualities were not augmented by his years, in which he surpassed his spouse full thirty: they had of course no children.

When he quitted this earthly sphere, she was advised to take a house and let lodgings in one of the river streets which open from the Strand—that in which our hero took up his abode. Her mother was at this time an old woman, who spoke her national tongue in a style fast going out of fashion, notwithstanding all our efforts to prevent it; and her father was dead. Some time after that event, Mrs M'Intyre, the old woman, prolonged her shopkeeping, but at last she became aged and infirm with rheumatism, which obliged her to retire from business, and to reside with her daughter; who, as the reader may have inferred for himself, was a kindly personage, and though a little thoughtless, not such as one meets with every day; only, in our opinion, she was too much addicted to large bows of pink or yellow riband on her bonnet, of which we could never approve.

When Rupert came to her door to look at the lodgings, she was much pleased with his appearance, and said inwardly to herself, that she hoped the apartments would suit, for he was a vastly genteel-looking young man, and would make a nice lodger.

THE JOKE

Whether the gods heard her prayer, or Rupert was easily pleased with the sight of the rooms, we know not, but he domiciled himself with her at once, and in the course of the day brought his bag and baggage from the inn where the stage-coach had put him down.

As he had never been in London before, and was in all things, notwithstanding a spice of shrewdness in his character, very simple, open-hearted, and easily pleased, he neglected to order the *et ceteras* of living, which are as requisite in London lodging-houses as elsewhere. But this proved no detriment; for the evening being wet, when the negligence was discovered, Mrs Kittle invited him to take tea with her and her mother in the little parlour on the ground floor. Had she been acquainted with the manner in which he had been brought up, and all the other appliances to boot to which he had been accustomed, she perhaps would have repressed her kindness; but, having learned from himself that he had come to attend the Academy, she judged very properly that as he was only a painter, he would feel the invitation as very civil. Nor was she wrong there; for Rupert gave her civility full credit for all she had intended, and did not think it necessary to remove any inflexion which he observed in her ideas respecting the profession of a painter, even though he was hugely tempted at one time to do so, when she inquired whether he intended to follow the line of a house or a ship painter. We have already said that, with all his *naïveté*, Rupert possessed a seasoning of shrewdness; he was also not without hum-

THE JOKE

our, and, as the bias of his genius was to marine scenes, he answered off hand that he had some intention of following ship painting.

This Mrs Kittle was delighted to hear; for, as she said, it was not only a genteel topping business, in which a man might make his fortune if his wife would let him, but she had some acquaintance that might in time be useful for him to know.

Rupert gratefully acknowledged her early kindness, but said that for some at least he would not trouble her, as he still had much to learn in the Academy.

Thus, from less to more, they grew in the first evening into an intimacy, which in time led to the results that we propose to narrate.

When he had retired for the night, Mrs Kittle and her mother had some conversation together respecting him.

“ I think,” said she, “ that we are very lucky in getting this young man to stay with us; for, although he is but a ship painter, I must say that he is a good-looking lad, and might, if he thought proper, hold his head up among gentlemen.”

“ Jenny, Jenny!” cried the old wife, “ dinna be cloch-ing on addled eggs; what has tou to do with a lodger? ”

“ My goodness, mother! don’t be going your lengths; I but with a decorum invited him to take a dish of tea with us.”

“ That’s very true, my leddy,” said the old woman; “ but, Jenny, the lad’s oure young.”

THE JOKE

“ Goodness, mother! what have I to do with his length of years? What’s put that in your head? ”

“ I’ll no say,” added the quick-sighted carline, “ that ye should; but I have an ee in my neck, and if I were called on so to do, I could prophesy a prophecy, though I am neither a prophet myself, nor yet a prophet’s daughter. And, Jenny, though it may be true that ye had a man weak stricken in years for your first gude-man, it would not look well to see you ta’en up with a callant for your second.”

“ Oh, Chrystal! ” cried Mrs Kittle; and feigning to have some business in another room, she lifted one of the lights and disappeared.

CHAPTER III

About the time that Rupert came to London, Mr Bragly informed the baronet that, by care and industry, it had pleased God to give him a competency in time to render it useful to his boy, intimating at the same time his intention of speedily returning. The game-some baronet was delighted with this intelligence; his native character sparkled out, and he was here and there and everywhere, busy with preparations to celebrate the return of his beloved youthful companion. He could not purchase enough of the rarest decorations for his elegant daughter; and so pleased was he at the prospect of again seeing his friend, that he thought everything not good enough to meet his view, and even

THE JOKE

that his daughter had become very ordinary in her bloom and beauty.

There was something amiable in this distorted feeling; and Miss Elina delighted in drily now and then persuading him that all he did in this kind spirit was exceedingly preposterous. In fact, such was the basis of good nature at the bottom of his character, that he was far better known to the young lady and the domestics than he allowed himself to believe; for, with all his eccentricities, he possessed much of an acute common sense that he was not easily mastered; and there was more of indulgence than submission in the liberties which he allowed to his darling and only daughter.

Among other things, he resolved to recall Rupert from London, and to celebrate the event of his father's return, with his marriage to Elina; for he made sure that neither of the young parties had any objections to the match; but, in consistency with his natural jocular-ity, he determined to keep them ignorant of his intention, and to treat the father as one only whom he had known as a companion in his boyish years, and not, as he had ever been, the greatest object of his friendship.

Accordingly, when the time was at hand that Mr Bragly was expected, he penned a wary and rather cold letter to Rupert, requesting him to come for a short time to the Hall, where his father was expected, evincing nothing of the particular pleasure he enjoyed at the prospect of meeting his old friend. There was, however, a small postscript at the bottom of the letter de-

THE JOKE

lightful to Rupert; it was a message from Elina, bidding him to be sure and come. Every word of this *nota bene* glowed, in his opinion, with more of heart than he had expected, especially after reading the baronet's polite, and, as it seemed, constrained invitation.

By the same post that Mr Bragly had communicated the period of his return to the baronet, Rupert received a letter from him, which, although it excited vivid pleasure, was not calculated greatly to inflate his hopes. With his wonted plain dealing, the merchant informed his son, that, although he was returning home with a fortune that satisfied his wishes, he was still comparatively but a poor man; as to the amount, however, he was himself content with it.

It happened, when this letter was received, and the baronet's invitation, that Rupert's straightened circumstances did not enable him to prepare for the journey quite in so good a plight as he wished; for, although the baronet's correspondents occasionally took some interest in seeing him at their houses, they had never disclosed the baronet's secret instructions, nor was there about them that heartiness which emboldened Rupert to ask their assistance. Thus he contrived to live upon his allowance, though he sometimes felt it inadequate to his expenditure. At the time he received Sir Robert's invitation he was drained dry as hay, and knew not what to do for a small sum to enable him to meet a parent whose worth he had much heard of, but whose person he had no recollection of having ever seen.

THE JOKE

In this dilemma, among others to whom he thought of applying for the loan of a few pounds, was his landlady, Mrs Kittle. From the first evening, notwithstanding the occasional remonstrances of her mother, she had cultivated his acquaintance with all the blandishments and assiduity in her power to display; but she rather with him overdid the business. He did not relish her attentions; and, although she never had a nice dinner without inviting him to partake, he was, in consequence, almost always engaged. However, necessity reverences no law; his poverty, the desire to see his father, and the invitation from Elina at the bottom of the baronet's letter, left him no alternative: thus, though the request was against the grain, and with much reluctance, he mustered courage enough, as the time drew near, to ask the enamoured lady for the loan.

When he applied to her, she most readily consented to advance what he wanted; but, endeavouring to look as languishing as it was possible for a fat and fair of forty to do, she said, that not only the sum he wanted would be given to him, but all she had was at his disposal, and gave vent to a deep sigh.

Rupert was somewhat surprised at her demeanour; but as we have stated, he was a simple lad, and, though adroit in many things, the machinations of the widow had not particularly attracted his attention. He regarded her civilities as common to the keepers of lodging-houses in London, and, although they made him wince a little, were, on the whole, such as bespoke the kindest

185

THE JOKE

return. But from the hour he laid himself under the pecuniary obligation, his eyes were opened, and he saw the whole drift at once of her manifold urbanities.

He would, in consequence, have retracted his request, but it was too late; and, like the other instruments of necessity, he softened to himself the hardship of asking her for a loan. He saw, indeed, at once, when he suspected her desires, that his conduct was susceptible of a sordid interpretation; but he had no choice. It was, however, his resolution, formed immediately after, to repay the money, and to quit the lodgings of Mrs Kittle.

The lady herself was in a sort of uneasy fluster; he had never shewn her more civility than a common lodger, and she could not disguise from herself that she paid him on all occasions the most marked attention. But when he applied to her for the money, she imagined that all was in the right road, and ascribed his behaviour, which was dictated by discretion, to a constitutional prudence, that made him seem to her more than he had ever been before. To her his request was therefore most acceptable; and her mother's caution on the subject was derided as the scrupulosity of wary old age.

"You may say," cried the glowing widow bewitched, "what you please; but what I have is my own, and I will do with it what I like."

"Ca' canny, my leddy Jenny," replied the old woman; "but it's a puir bridegroom that the bride maun buy breeks to, as Lady Mary Livingstone said, when she was married to the heighland chieftain; I have my mis-

THE JOKE

doobts if Mr Rupert be a right sort of man for taking advantage of your silliness to borrow siller."

"I wonder, mother," cried Mrs Kittle, reddening, "that you would in that manner let your tongue run away with your sense; is he not a well-behaved young man, and worthy of any reflecting woman's patronage?"

"Patronage here, or patronage there," Mrs M'Intyre fervently replied; "he does na want for a stock of impudence to borrow from you. I'm very angry with you, Jenny; that man could gar you believe that spade-shafts would bear plums."

"It's well known," said Mrs Kittle huffily, "that you have no good-will to Mr Rupert."

"How's that known?" cried her mother, still waxing more displeased; adding, "I'll tell you, Jenny, that ye're a cutty, that's what ye are."

"Your words, mother," replied Mrs Kittle, "are no scandal."

But the old woman summoned all her decayed energies at this retort, and, beating her fists together in the face of her daughter, commanded her to hold her tongue.

CHAPTER IV

Mr Bragly, from the West Indies, arrived at Merrywell Hall on the same day that his son came from London. In all his Majesty's dominions, there was not a happier group than assembled in the evening round the playful-humoured baronet's board; he was himself the

THE JOKE

gayest of the party; his jokes were certainly unsheathed, for they glanced and glittered in all directions; even his friend, Mr Bragly, complimented him on the improvement which his mirthful wit had acquired by time; and observed, that if he lived to the age of Methuselah, it might provoke a laugh: at present, people laughed at his endeavours.

The baronet parried the sarcasm of his friend by saying, that, as to make people laugh was his sole object, it was the same thing whether endeavours or brilliancy produced it.

Sir Robert was indeed in high feather; he saw matter for mirth even in sadness; and his memory, amidst the reminiscences of former days, the relics of departed pleasures, seemed only to find pranks of strategem and snatches of joy.

On the following day the sports and amusements, planned for the welcome of Mr Bragly, began ; and the tenantry were all as happy, in partaking, as if the feast had been at their own cost. The whole country rung with the cheerfulness of the Hall; and, as the baronet's character was well known, all who heard of the occasion participated in the enjoyment—for sympathy is too weak a word to express the hilarity which they felt at the imagined whims and practical jokes ascribed to the diversions.

In the county town was published a weekly newspaper, which, among other important intelligence concerning chickens with two heads and apple trees in un-

THE JOKE

timely blossom, contained a column devoted to a description of the doings at Merrywell Hall. This paper Rupert had been in the practice of receiving, sent to him by the gentle hands of Miss Elina herself, sometimes with a surreptitious marginal note, containing some article of intelligence not worth the postage. Rupert did not think it necessary to countermand the paper when he left London, and it so happened that in his absence it was opened by Mrs Kittle. There she saw all that was going on at the Hall; and among other things, a most alarming paragraph, stating that these rejoicings were preliminary to the nuptials of Mr Rupert Bragly and Miss Elina, the only daughter and heiress of the much-esteemed baronet.

Mrs Kittle could not believe her own eyes, which revealed this dreadful intelligence. Twice did she essay to read it; and tears, such as widows shed when they are jilted, burst forth. At last a more ardent feeling succeeded; the remembrance of all she had done to excite a respondent flame in the breast of her lodger rushed upon her. With a mind in which were mingled thoughts of the pastimes to which the baronet had invited so many, and the recollection of Rupert's (improperly called) perfidy, like the gelatinous combination of pepper and veal-head in mock-turtle soup, she cogitated over the newspaper, and acknowledged to herself that she suffered an anxiety that was greater than human nature in her could endure. At last she hit upon a splendid expedient; no less than to go herself to the

189

THE JOKE

scene of action, and reiterate there all the stratagems of her hopes and passion—in some doubt, however, if the Rupert Bragly betrothed to the baronet's daughter could be the same good-looking young man who had beguiled her tender heart.

Accordingly, she resolved instanter to go by the first coach to Merrywell Hall, where, if she did not find the painter quite ripened and mellow enough for marrying, she was sure that he would assist her to the best place for seeing the games, of which the newspaper had given so enchanting an account. But as the distance was considerable, and she could not go without apprising her mother, she had some misgivings if she would consent. However, a middle course presented itself as practicable. Mrs Kittle conceived that although, in consideration of what was due to decorum, she still allowed her aged parent to snub her, she yet was come to years of discretion enough, on an emergency like the present, in which she had a right to act for herself; and it came to pass that she did so: but, before coming to that determination, she deemed it a duty to consult her mother on the subject. The business, however, required a little address, for which Mrs Kittle was not eminent; yet she broke the ice to her loving parent with something like the following words—

“Here is,” said she, with the paper in her hand, “an account of great triumphing at that gentleman's place where our lodger said he was going. I wonder how he did not take me with him; for all the world are there!”

THE JOKE

“Jenny,” cried the mother, “tou doesna ken whether thy head or thy feet are uppermost when thou thinks of that hobbleteho—*for he’s no better. What would thou do skipping like a mawkin among a crowd of uncas?*”

The widow affected to be very indignant at her mother’s insinuation, and replied: “It is a strange thing that a person cannot speak of a rural felicity, without being obliged to hear an ill-natured remark on it. If it was not more for one thing than another, I would go to the ploy by the coach this very afternoon, just to punish you for thinking so lightly of my conduct.”

“Punish me!” cried the old woman; “Jenny, my leddy, none of your whether or no’s with me. Punish me!—no, no, that would never be a reason for going; it would be to pleasure yourself.”

“You are always so cross,” cried Mrs Kittle; “putting yourself in the way of others going to happiness. I can afford to go if I please, and who will stop me?”

“They that will to Cupar, will,” exclaimed the old woman; “and it’s needless for me to offer my counsel to receive a rejection; for, if you be set upon going, I’m oure frail and aged to haud you.”

“That, mother,” said the widow, “is a very comical insinuation. Really you would provoke the elect. To save my character, you will force me to go. It’s very wrong of you, mother, to use me in this way.”

“Weel, weel,” replied the old woman, “tak your own will; it’s no me that can keep a doncy dochter from her fate.”

THE JOKE

“ Now,” said Mrs Kittle, “ could not you have given your consent at first, when maybe such a thing as going to this ploy would never have entered my head; but your insinuations have really been too bad, and oblige me to go for the sake of my character.”

“ Jenny,” said the old mother, pensively, “ I am no now in a condition to strive, or it would not be to seek what I have to say; but it’s no to big a kirk that takes you away gallanting to the back of the world, and gude kens how much farther.”

In this way Mrs Kittle made it very clear to her own conscience, that, to preserve her reputation from a slanderous world, it was necessary that she should go by the coach that afternoon to the county town in the neighbourhood of which Merrywell Hall was situated. It was certainly a dreadful journey for a poor widow; and she shed many tears of reluctance on the occasion, saying that nothing but the preservation of all that was dear to her could have instigated her to undertake such a journey.

CHAPTER V

Among other stimulants of bumpkin ecstasies, which the baronet had contrived for the week of welcoming which he had allotted to celebrate the return of the friend of his youth, was the elegant exercise of a pig race, that is to say, an animal of that species let loose with its tail besmeared with grease, and to be the prize of him who should first catch it. It happened that the

THE JOKE

day for the performance of this game was that on which Mrs Kittle reached the county town, where she found all agog, and in their best, preparing to partake of the amusement.

The mayor's lady, a portly dame, headed the ladies of the other members of the corporation, and several of their daughters, with other grandees of the feminine gender belonging to the borough. She was dressed as befitted her station; and a proud woman was she, as she led her phalanx to the park. The schoolmaster had given his boys a holiday, and led them in rank and file, Lord knows how many! with clean shirts and bands, blue coats with large buttons on them, yellow leather breeches, blue worsted stockings, and shoes fastened by brazen clasps: they also went on their way rejoicing. The corporation was more desultory, but all the members were there: in fact the whole town was there, but a few of the old people and malcontents; so that Mrs Kittle was informed by the landlady of the inn at which the coach stopped, that there had not been such a to-do as was then coming to pass at Merrywell Hall since Rodney's victory, which she well remembered was one of the greatest in all time in the known world.

Mrs Kittle was a good deal tired by her journey; she had travelled all night, and inclined rather to go to bed than to the adjacent park, where the whole countryside was assembling to share the gambols; but everybody knows that love is a sleepless passion, especially when such amusements are afoot. The widow therefore, un-

THE JOKE

der the influence of both, resolved to dress herself anew, rather than to court the embraces of Morpheus; accordingly, having partaken of breakfast, she hied into a bedroom, and was not long of decorating; but with all her speed, she was among the last who left the town, and conspicuous by the pink bow of her bonnet, when she approached the crowd assembled on the lawn in front of the hall.

Rupert, with the baronet's guests and a large party, were accommodated on a scaffold, erected to afford a better view of the pastimes than could be got by struggling in the multitude on the ground; and he saw from this elevated station the approaching apparition of Mrs Kittle. The first emotion of astonishment having subsided, he went down to her, and, after expressing his surprise at her appearance, conducted her up to a delightful situation on the platform, where the select of the company were assembled: such distinction transcended the good lady's most sanguine hopes; she had never been so far advanced among gentlefolks before, and she deemed her reputation completely vindicated.

Rupert, among several others, told who Mrs Kittle was, and beginning to suspect her designs on himself, told the baronet of his suspicion. He could not have communicated to that gentleman a more delicious secret, for it was now the third day of the rejoicings, and, to whisper something in the reader's ear, Sir Robert was by this time beginning to think his fête and pageantry a cursed bore—and three days of it were yet to come.

THE JOKE

The appearance, however, of Mrs Kittle was an unspoken interlude, and the baronet's thirst for something new was highly gratified.

No sooner had Rupert told him the news, than he turned briskly round to look at the lady, who stood conspicuous at some distance, her bow like a peony, and her face, which we must acknowledge to have been comely, glowing with all the animation that fluttering emotions and blooming plumpness could express. The moment that Sir Robert saw her, after hearing Rupert's mischief-making story, he, as lord of the feast, went towards her, and, characteristic of himself, while he congratulated her on the additional pleasure which her blithe countenance diffused over the scene, without much preface, affected to fall in love with her.

This was not exactly what Rupert anticipated, for, as we have said, with all his endowments, he was a simple-minded young man.

Miss Elina, who observed her father paying more than ordinary attentions to the blooming dame, was a little surprised, as she could not imagine who the stranger was. Only Mr Bragly, who knew his friend of old, guessed the drift of his jocularities, and was more amused at it than at the race which they had come to see; for it was evident to him that Sir Robert was making a shew of love which was not altogether disagreeable to the enterprising widow. She had by this time learned the rank of the baronet, and was flattered beyond expression with his unexpected blandishments, insomuch that

THE JOKE

she thought less and less of Rupert, compared with the interest which he was more and more exciting in her sensitive bosom.

Rupert, observing what was passing, congratulated himself on what he had done, believing that Sir Robert would keep the widow so engaged as to allow him unmolested pleasure in attending only on Elina, to whom absence, in his opinion, had added many charms. But long before the entertainment of the day was finished, he was surprised at seeing Sir Robert still continuing, in a very ardent manner, his attentions to the London widow. He was not quite satisfied; for he thought the baronet was continuing the joke too long, and saw that he himself had ceased to be an object of attraction in the lady's fond sight.

But whatever were the fears and anxieties which began to rise in his bosom, they were matured by observing Sir Robert bring the delighted dame through the crowd and introduce her to his daughter as an old friend of whom they had often heard from Rupert, and who had come purposely from London to participate in their recreations.

All this was not just what our hero had expected; and he thought the baronet a little too excessive in the kindness in his manner towards Mrs Kittle, who received it with the happiest complacency. Dread grew to terror when Sir Robert invited the lady to be of their party at the Hall, and whispered to Elina to invite her to stay with them during the remainder of the games.

THE JOKE

Miss Elina was not overly pleased to be so employed; but she partook of her father's nature; being, however, seized with a little wonderment or jealousy at what besides the stage-coach had brought the blooming widow from London, she performed the task in such a manner that the invitation was cordially accepted.

CHAPTER VI

The indoor hospitality of the baronet was analogous to his open-air entertainment. It was rough, jocund, plenteous, and not distinguished for refinement. He had a vast multitude assembled to partake of his banquets; a miscellaneous crowd, in which Mrs Kittle was remarked as unknown: but she deservedly obtained particular attention, not only for the glowing blitheness of her looks, but for the overpowering predominance of her pink bows.

She was, besides being the particular object of Sir Robert's politeness, much esteemed by two large corpulent clergymen, who, highly pleased with her appearance, seated her between them, and talked to her, whispering nonsense and unutterable things.

Though the taste and habits of Sir Robert were deemed eccentric, he had yet from early youth nourished one commendable quality with a keener relish than usual of boisterous pleasures and practical jokes—this was a dislike to every species of intemperance, as degrading to man; and, in consequence, with all that

THE JOKE

might have tempted to excess, his gayest and most promiscuous entertainments were always marked with the most agreeable sobriety. No one beheld at his crowded table an instance of indecorum, incensed by wine; nor were the sessions at them prolonged beyond that happy cheerfulness which prepared the mind for a new form of social enjoyment. Accordingly, in moving from the tables to enjoy the revelries of the evening, there was at once great sprightliness and much temperate mirth.

Still, Rupert and Elina could not understand the civilities which attracted Sir Robert to the widow; but a calm observer might have detected, by careful study, a latent smile dawning at times among the sombre features of Mr Bragly, who alone had a just conception that his friend meant nothing by his flattery to Mrs Kittle. He was also something of a philosopher, and put upon the baronet's marked and remarked conduct a construction very different from that which it received from persons of less reflection. From the hour of his arrival, he had discerned in his old friend a buoyancy of mind and a forgetfulness of care which reminded him of the sunny days they had passed in youth together; and to the influence of this hilarity he ascribed his demeanour to the widow. Others imagined, from the same cause, that the baronet was intoxicated with her charms.

Mrs Kittle herself, who, as we have shewn, was not the most circumspect of her sex, was delighted with the impression which she imagined her appearance had pro-

THE JOKE

duced on the susceptible heart of her host; and, in consequence, her passion for Rupert, if so it may be termed, underwent a change. He was still in her opinion the properest young man whom she had that day seen; but there was something in the idea of being the lady of all she beheld which greatly soothed the anxieties of love.

Before the evening was well closed, the baronet's excessive adulation had completely won her heart; nor is this to be much regarded to her dishonour, for a ship-painter was no rival to a baronet.

It is not to be supposed that Rupert was all this time without paying her any attention. Whenever a fitting time presented itself, he shewed her all proper civility; and had the good fortune, in some accidental moment, to discover that another object had supplanted his image in her affections. The circumstance gave him great pleasure; for among other things which the baronet had prepared to afford satisfaction to his friend, was the fulfilment of his promise to give the fair Elina to Rupert, and had announced the celebration of the wedding as one of the fêtes he had prepared for the week.

It thus happened that when Mrs Kittle, so strangely the victim of the baronet's playful humour, was conducted at night to her bedroom, she had a nice chatty and interesting conversation with the maid who lighted her to bed. From her she learned the nuptials impending, when they were to be celebrated, and everything that was to her important. But when the Abigail retired, she had a long confabulation with herself upon

THE JOKE

the subject, and began her soliloquy by cogently remarking, "Who would ever have imagined that I was to be the leddy of a Sir!—we know not, however, what Providence has ordained us to come to. No doubt, I would have been content—such is the short-sightedness of worldly wisdom—with the painter lad; though I'll no say that there was some truth in my mother's expostulation, for certainly, as a huband to the likes of me, he was too young; but Sir Robert, he is of a right age: I'll no say that he's so perfect a man as the painter; but then he's a baronet, and very rich—that makes up for any defect of nature about him; and then he's younger than poor Mr Kittle was when I first married him, and that's many years ago. Of the two, I think it would be most prudent for a woman like me, therefore, to turn her affections on the baronet. Besides, it appears that I have been all in the wrong box, for the young man, in a very romantical manner, has been pledged to Miss Elina as far back as to be scarcely within the memory of man; and I am but making an April fool of myself by thinking that he will ever answer to the regard that has brought me from London. No, I give up the design, and will content myself as a prudent woman with accepting the baronet's hand and fortune. However, it becomes my critical situation to say nothing till the young couple's affair is well over; for, in decency, it would rather be overly soon to think that me and the baronet could come to a clear understanding in the eyes of the world. Heigho! I do think, upon reflection, that the painter

THE JOKE

has not used me well, to borrow of me for the purpose of sweethearting with Miss; but we know not what a day will bring forth. Never did I think it was in the power of nature to make me a lawful lady among the great. How my mother will stare when she hears of my good luck! sure am I it will close her mouth; she'll never venture to insinuate again. But, poor old woman, her wits are wavering by reason of old age, and I must not be too austere. Instead of gloves and ribands, I will give her a fur cloak, on account of her rheumatics; and, with the blessing of heaven, she'll see her error, and talk in a proper manner to me. I will not be overly severe, for she's a good creature; and as she says sometimes herself, 'old folk must be endured, for they are twice bairns.' I wonder, however, what jointure Sir Robert will settle; I'll not take a farthing less than was given to his first leddy—that's a preliminary point. But it's time to go to bed, and I'll consider the affair with my soberest waking thoughts in the morning. Upon the whole, I have reason in the meantime to be very thankful."

CHAPTER VII

The morning was blithe, fresh, fragrant, and breezy; the flowers smiled like maidens, and every leaf twinkled with light; when Mrs Kittle, blooming like a dahlia, descended from her chamber to bask in the beams that sparkled from the baronet, brightening into brilliancy every visage around him. Our limits do not permit us

THE JOKE

to record the many excellent *bons mots* which he uttered on that occasion; we can only speak in general terms of his gaiety and glitter.

He had, in a great measure, forgotten his flirtation the preceding day with Mrs Kittle; but the moment that she appeared, blushing like the sun in the horizon, his recollection of her returned, and with it the fond passion that had prompted him to utter so many fine things when he introduced himself to her.

At first, Elina and her lover were as much diverted by his conspicuous languishments as any of the party at the breakfast table; but Sir Robert threw himself occasionally into such enamoured positions, that they began to grow grave, and Miss Elina in particular could not conceal her alarm. However, as it was her wedding-day, her fears were neither deep nor serious; for her thoughts were, from that circumstance, diverted to other considerations.

On account of the wedding, there was no forenoon diversion—all the mirth was reserved for the evening; still it was a busy time at the Hall, and although Mrs Kittle did all in her power to attract the baronet, they were sometimes separated, which afforded Mr Bragly opportunities of remonstrating with Sir Robert on his preposterous affectation. But on such a day—his daughter's marriage—all persuasion was but thrashing the water, and raising of bubbles. Rupert expressed also to Elina his great grief that he should have been so ready in introducing Mrs Kittle to the party, adding,

THE JOKE

“ Who could have thought that your father would have been guilty of such folly? ”

And her reply shewed the peril into which matters were now come.

“ I hope,” said she, “ he will not play the fool at his time of life.”

Nor was the widow less convinced of his earnestness, and more than once thought of various alterations she would make in the Hall, whatever her old mother might say; heartily, however, joining in the felicitations of the baronet on the joyous events of the festival, and smiling upon him with her softest eyes.

In consequence of all these things, she rejoiced in the progress towards the completion of Rupert's happiness, although at one time she fondly deemed it would be shared with herself; and she witnessed the ceremony of the union performed with almost equal satisfaction to that enjoyed by any of the guests, for the removal of Miss Elina would undoubtedly lessen all impediments to the consummation of what she thought was evidently her own unavoidable fate. But not to spin out the story too long, Mr Bragly considered it necessary at last to interfere; for his friend, by the effect that was visible on her, was carrying the joke too far.

Accordingly, soon after the young couple had been made one, he regarded it as a duty to set Mrs Kittle right as to what were the real intentions of the baronet. For this purpose he took an early opportunity of speaking to her, and began by remarking how fond of practical jokes his friend had ever been.

THE JOKE

Mrs Kittle observed, with a simper, that he certainly was a funny man.

“ Yes,” said Mr Bragly, “ but he becomes sometimes so interested in his own joke, that he forgets its nature altogether.”

Mrs Kittle observed, with simplicity, that it was a great pity he did so.

“ It is, indeed,” said Mr Bragly; “ yet were the delusion confined to himself, it would be only what he deserved; but, unfortunately, others are often made the victims of his amusement.”

The widow looked at Mr Bragly as if she did not quite understand him, and a slight cast of alarm might be detected at the root of some of her features; but she said nothing, and the sedate merchant seriously proceeded—

“ I make the remark,” said he, “ because I have observed that Sir Robert has appeared much fascinated with you, and I wish to put you on your guard.”

Again the widow looked surprised, and said, with a pathetic accent, that she hoped Sir Robert was not such a deceiver.

“ Oh,” cried Mr Bragly, “ no, no! he means only a little harmless mirth; but those who don’t know his way are apt to be taken in.”

“ Taken in!” cried Mrs Kittle, “ taken in!” And in repeating the words there was some tremor in her voice; but Mr Bragly proceeded—

“ Those who know my friend, relish his jokes; but strangers are generally of the opinion that he affects

THE JOKE

too much earnestness, and as you never saw him before yesterday, perhaps you may think so too."

Mrs Kittle looked at grave Mr Bragly while he was speaking, and gradually bending forward, clenching her hands, and cramping up both her arms with rage, exclaimed,

"Oh, the monster!" and turning round to make her exit, met the baronet full in the face coming towards them.

"Hey day!" said he, "what's the matter? You look flustered, my duckie!"

"Goose!" cried Mrs Kittle; and gave him a great push.

"I have told you," exclaimed Mr Bragly, "you were going too far; this unfortunate lady thought you sincere."

"I am not unfortunate yet," cried the widow, trembling with passion.

"You alarm me!" said the baronet; and added, seriously, "my dear Mrs Kittle! did you really think me in earnest?"

But she was unable to articulate one word more; her face became purple; she staggered with indignation to discover that she had been so much the dupe of a mere joke or stratagem; but recovering her energy, she stamped loud and vehemently with her foot, and before the playful baronet could say "Jack Robinson," she gave him two alternate hearty smacks on the face, and exclaiming, "You perjured wretch, you!" flounced out of the room, and was off by the coach that night to London, a woful woman.

Fraser's Magazine, September 1833.



VI

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

WHEN I first left home, adversity had not visited my father's house; it was in all things the residence of a moderate prosperity. He was himself then in the vigour of life, and though he could not be envied for eminent success, he had yet good reason to be satisfied with the lot which Providence had assigned to him. Probity and thrift had raised him a little above his original condition; and the blessings bestowed by their means were sweetened to him by the affection and happy temper of my mother, who took the same pride and pleasure in her domestic duties that minds of higher endowment take in more refined pursuits.

Their family consisted of three children, two boys and a girl. I was the second son. My brother Lawrence was the eldest, and the hope and ornament of the family. From his childhood he had been accounted no vulgar boy; and as he grew up he gave signs of possessing talents that would in time make him distinguished in the world. Far above every man I have since met with, he was adorned with a frankness and simplicity that could not be known without inspiring love and esteem; yet he was withal so modest and unpretending, that his merits were not justly appreciated by his companions: and even some of our friends and relations often wondered that, with so much intelligence as he ever shewed when tested, he should appear so little animated with enterprise.

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

Their fear was that he would become indolent, and never draw the bow of the world with the full energy of his strength. Alas! they saw not the spirit that was asleep in his bosom. He required only to be placed on the proper stage, to have become "the observed of all observers."

Poor Lawrence had one fault, but it was only correctly discerned by his mother—too much confidence in others. Often and often have I heard her say, looking at him with tears in her eyes, "Treat all men as rogues; and if you find them honest, my dear boy, the unhappiness of your distrust will then be rewarded." Save the sadness that was occasionally in such kind maternal bodement, there never was at that well-ordered hearth a darker or a harsher influence. He was the first of us that went away into the world; I remember the morning well, and the bright and beautiful rainbow that spanned, like a triumphal arch, the road he was to take; the emblem of his fortune—brilliant and substantial—it was dispersed in a storm.

My sister Niome was about two years my senior—the embodied excellence, feminine and lovely, of all the genius and delicacy of her elder brother. In her appearance amidst her companions she was elegant and interesting, but not in these delightful qualities greatly beyond, though above them. It was when alone, however, that her superiority, worth, and graces wore their most endearing aspect, and then the most refined and gentlest of her sex shone as if she could have no competitor; for, besides those pure elements in which she resembled

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

our brother, she had received from Heaven the gift of an exalted piety, which surrounded her with a charm that I could never find an image in nature to compare with but the halo that encircles the serene moon, when the winds are at rest, and a thin mist in visible repose deepens the solemnity of the silent landscape. Religion, with many, dictates duty, and exalts the heart with hopes and speculations concerning another and a better world; but in her it was a feeling, an intellectual passion, the spring and impulse of benevolence, that allowed but of pity even for the erring.

Of myself, it is not intended to speak more than may be required to illustrate the advents of the change which has taken place in that peaceful dwelling, and which so many incidents have had the effect of placing so remotely distant. I look back through a long avenue of years, and I see in the far-off sunshine the sparkling windows of that cheerful home, which now to me is ever silent.

My father, in the course of his affairs, had occasion to be absent for some time; and my mother availed herself of the opportunity to visit her old nurse, who lived at some distance, and to whom she was much attached. All her children were to be with her; and the preparations for this great occasion beggared in my young imagination all that I had heard of in the visitations of kings and fairies. Necromancers were a lurid race, and such bliss they could never have shared.

A wagon was expressly hired, large hoops were bent

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

over it, and a cover was provided to be drawn on them in case of rain. Many a time in the course of the previous afternoon did I accompany my brother to examine the progress of fixing the hoops. Alexander the Great, on the evening before his entrance into Babylon, saw not so proudly his pavilion raised.

Goody Gleanings, as the nurse was called,

“ Lived in a cottage far retired
Amidst the windings of a woody vale ”

close by a mill near a little village, that has long been removed by the ruthless ploughshare of improvement. The church is still standing. It was the first with a steeple I had ever seen; and the weathercock that crowned it stood long after in my remembrance as the very phoenix of the Egyptian tale.

The old woman had received notice of our coming, and, dressed in her Sunday garments in honour of the visit, was sitting at her door feeding three or four hens from her hand. Her cat sat demurely at her feet; but on hearing the cumbrous approach of our heavy chariot-wheels, she sprung upon the thatch of the little, but trim hovel, and looked wonderingly down from behind the chimney as we drew near.

Goody Gleanings was very poor. She had long been a widow; and her only child, our mother's foster-brother, had enlisted for a soldier, and had then been many years away in the Indian wars. He was forgotten by almost everybody but the old woman herself, who delighted to speak of him when she sometimes came to

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

see us, especially to my brother, who was her constant auditor. Never shall I forget how Lawrence would erect himself when she described the glory of her hero's panoply, and the white marks on the arm of his scarlet coat—the guerdons of his promotion to the dignity of a corporal.

In consideration of the poverty of the old woman, we had a store-basket filled for the journey; in which I recollect, and shall never forget, there was a pie of such dimensions, that had she been an ogress to be propitiated for the sake of the three children, it ought to have been ample, and innumerable other nice things, on which all our pocket-money had been voluntarily expended by ourselves, to increase the luxury of the banquet. The pie is, however, most particularly engraved on my memory. It was the biggest I had ever seen; and the preceding evening, when warm, not only the most delicious in festal fragrance, but, when cold, by far the best I ever tasted—beyond all comparison better than the one made of four and twenty blackbirds and set before the king. Yet were not these all its rich and rare virtues. The cook had, with the genius of Praxiteles, crowned the apex with a bird, which she assured us was an eagle, and which could not be enough admired for its expanded wings, and two legs most wonderfully joined into one.

Other articles were in the basket, which, however, were not particularly interesting to any of the children, except a large type prayer-book from my sister, who

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

had a few days before finished her sampler, and when asked what reward she would accept, solicited this as a gift to bestow herself on Goody.

While in the midst of the feast, which was served out of doors on the shady side of the cottage, we observed a foot traveller coming along the road, with a stick over his shoulder, from which depended a small bundle. There was nothing when he was first seen to attract our particular attention, further than that he was dressed as an old soldier, and that he had lost an arm, as we could discover at some distance, by his empty sleeve.

When we approached some fifty or a hundred yards towards us, he suddenly halted, and retiring from the highway, leant himself against a gate which opened into a field. My mother happened to notice him, and as the day was warm and bright, proposed that we should take him some refreshment. Immediately the eager children offered their services; and the nurse, with the tear in her eye at the remembrance of her own son, afar off in the sultry and distant Indies, trembled from head to foot, and sat down on a chair incapable of assisting in the hospitable task.

As we advanced to the spot where he was leaning, instead of the veteran whom we expected, he appeared to be a young man, severely bronzed by climate, but still handsome, save only that he wanted his arm. On seeing us, he turned his head aside; and my brother Lawrence, pushing my sister and me gently back, went up to him alone, for he observed that the poor fellow was in tears.

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

I need not waste words; it was Dick Gleanings, returned an invalid from the wars. Seeing the little group at his mother's door, he was suddenly overcome by his feelings, for he guessed who the children were—inquiring if our names were not Elton, telling us, in the same breath, his own. Instead, however, of answering his question, we seized upon him at once, and dragged him to the cottage with shouts and rejoicing. David returning with the head of Goliath was not so exultingly welcomed by the daughters of Israel.

The nurse in the meantime, sitting with her back towards us, and holding her handkerchief to her eyes, did not observe our approach; but my mother, who noticed the sudden outburst of rejoicing, guessed the cause, and roused the old woman with the news that it was Dick.

Instantly, with an alacrity foreign to her sedate nature, and a bounding gladness extraordinary for her years, she came hastily to meet us, and clasped the soldier in her arms. In this rash delight she had not remarked his empty sleeve, and for about the space of a minute her caresses and joy were unmingled, but when she saw how he had been mutilated, she started back from him and looked at him wildly: methinks I see her at this moment, and hear the piercing shriek of grief that she uttered as she again flung her arms about his neck. She then lifted the loose sleeve, and, gazing at it for a moment, exclaimed, with a voice of agony, "My pretty boy!" All the children wept in sympathy, but the effect on my brother Lawrence was singular; he left

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

the group and went into the cottage, where he remained alone all the remainder of the time we stayed, and for several days after continued sad and shy; and I heard the nursery-maid tell my mother that he frequently repeated the affecting ejaculation in his sleep.

But his right arm was not all poor Dick had lost; his rustic heartiness, for he had been naturally of a blithe and jocund humour, was changed into a boisterous freedom; and the camp and licentious towns, in depriving him of his simplicity, had substituted dissolute habits and incorrigible idleness. But still his old affectionate mother saw in these vices only reasons, as it were, to love him dearer; for when she spoke of his irregularities, which increased the necessities of her own poverty, she seemed to consider them as indulgences to which he had acquired a right by the toils of war, and the helplessness to labour, entailed by the loss of his arm.

The next important incident which befell us was the arrival of a tutor for my brother and me. Our father's income, though respectable for his station, was not large; and it was partly in consequence of that circumstance, and the pleasure he had in his family, that he agreed, with my mother, to engage Mr Spell to superintend our education at home.

This young gentleman was the son of a neighbouring clergyman, and had distinguished himself at college; but the talent which obtained the reputation that led to his engagement with us did not fit him for a teacher. He was himself too fond of literature to relish the dis-

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

tasteful thralldom of a tutor; and to that circumstance I would ascribe some of my deficiencies, were I not conscious that my lot was not ordained to be brilliant. Humble, quiet, and sequestered, I have however always found myself abundantly supplied with all the ability ever requisite to execute the sober purposes which Providence has called me to perform. But Lawrence, the apt and the inquisitive, who never found an obstacle in any task of life, made no progress under this amiable and gentle student; and yet the domicile of Mr Spell in my father's house was an influential epoch. Our mother had previously superintended the rudiments of our education herself, but other claims of a more household kind often interfered with her tuition, and marred the punctuality so essential to the proper effect of instruction. Regularity in the mere course and hours of our lessons was, however, the sole advantage we derived from the change; and yet the suavity, the blameless behaviour, and the artlessness of Mr Spell, endeared him to us all; my father, I am persuaded, was for a long time convinced that some defect in the capacity of his children was more in fault than any remissness in their tutor. But the case was different indeed. When set in to our lessons, Mr Spell read for his own amusement beside us, and when we were ready to repeat them, he would reluctantly lay down his book and listen with a dull and drowsy ear. For erudition and absence of mind, he is now, however, the pride and butt of his university.

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

He remained with us only a year; for at last my father lost confidence in his abilities as a teacher, by observing that we were gradually losing that respect which is one of the best indications pupils unconsciously evince of the benefits they are deriving from their instructors. But although it is probable that the old gentleman might have been some time longer in making up his mind to part with him, an incident occurred which precipitated his decision.

Fools and children have more talent for observation than they get credit for. Lawrence and myself had noticed the listlessness with which Mr Spell attended to our lessons, and we in our turn grew also listless, and slurred them over with a hardihood of countenance that was often audacious; we even went a step further, and, with an impudence that schoolboys only dare assume, affected to have received other tasks than those which had been given. On one occasion of this kind, we went so far as to repeat, on three successive days, a lesson which we had learnt so imperfectly, that he had ordered us to study it again. Out of revenge for this imposition, we repeated it three successive times more, reminding Mr Spell that he had ordered us to do so. Not content with this, we boasted of the trick to our mother, who had early discovered his unfitness for his duties, and her representation decided the reluctant judgment of my father to part with him.

This incident, in itself so trifling, evolved an impressive lesson. On me it had a curious effect, which has

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

endured throughout life, and I am certain it was equally permanent on the sensitive bosom of my brother. The family were all so much attached to the sweet and even-tempered Mr Spell, and had so often the most vivid enjoyment from his innocence and *naïveté*, that when the day arrived on which he was to leave us, we were sincerely sorrowful. It seemed both to Lawrence and myself that we were in some way the delinquent cause of his removal, and, in communing on the subject, were touched with a sharp sting of remorse, which goaded us so far, that we went and entreated my father to retain him, confessing ourselves entirely to blame. I shall never forget the kindness with which the old gentleman listened to this burst of juvenile generosity, in delivering which poor Lawrence gave even then a splendid presage of that eloquence which had afterwards no equal, but never came to any fruit. Parental anxiety for our interest, however, prevailed; and the regret which my brother and I felt at our ineffectual interference, made us ever afterwards cautious in considering what might be the consequences of even the most playful actions before we undertook them.

Occurrences of this kind are little noticed in the progress of education; but many such, and even of less importance, imprint the mind with sentiments that in riper life grow into moral principles, and influence the conduct and character in the avocations of manhood.

But I must conclude this reminiscence. I am now an aged man. The scenes I would describe are of things

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

afar off, and can be seen no more. That happy dwelling is at a great distance, the home of strangers—and all I loved are in the silent grave—all but Dick Gleanings; he is yet alive. When I last saw him he was an old grey-headed beggar-man.

Fraser's Magazine, October 1833.

VII
THE GUDEWIFE



THE GUDEWIFE

INTRODUCTION

I AM inditing the good matter of this book for the instruction of our only daughter when she comes to years of discretion, as she soon will, for her guidance when she has a house of her own, and has to deal with the kittle temper of a gudeman in so couthy a manner as to mollify his sour humour when anything out of doors troubles him. Thanks be and praise I am not ill qualified, indeed it is a clear ordinance that I was to be of such a benefit to the world; for it would have been a strange thing if the pains taken with my education had been purposeless in the decrees of Providence.

Mr Desker, the schoolmaster, was my father; and, as he was reckoned in his day a great teacher, and had a pleasure in opening my genie for learning, it is but reasonable to suppose that I in a certain manner profited by his lessons, and made a progress in parts of learning that do not fall often into the lot of womankind. This much it behoves me to say, for there are critical persons in the world that might think it very upsetting of one of my degree to write a book, especially a book which has for its end the bettering of the conjugal condition. If I did not tell them, as I take it upon me to do, how well I have been brought up for the work, they might look down upon my endeavours with a doubtful

THE GUDEWIFE

eye; but when they read this, they will have a new tout to their old horn, and reflect with more reverence of others who may be in some things their inferiors, superiors, or equals. It would not become me to say to which of these classes I belong, though I am not without an inward admonition on that head.

It fell out, when I was in my twenties, that Mr Thrifter came, in the words of the song of Auld Robin Gray, "a-courting to me;" and, to speak a plain matter of fact, in some points he was like that bald-headed carle. For he was a man considering my juvenility, well stricken in years; besides being a bachelor, with a natural inclination (as all old bachelors have) to be dozened, and fond of his own ayes and nays. For my part, when he first came about the house, I was as dawty as Jeanie—as I thought myself entitled to a young man, and did not relish the apparition of him coming in at the gloaming, when the day's darg was done, and before candles were lighted. However, our lot in life is not of our own choosing. I will say—for he is still to the fore—that it could not have been thought he would have proved himself such a satisfactory gudeman as he has been. To be sure, I put my shoulder to the wheel, and likewise prayed to Jupiter; for there never was a rightful head of a family without the concurrence of his wife. These are words of wisdom that my father taught, and I put in practice.

Mr Thrifter, when he first came about me, was a bein man. He had parts in two vessels, bsides his own shop,

THE GUDEWIFE

and was sponisible for a nest-egg of lying money; so that he was not, though rather old, a match to be, as my father thought, discomfited with a flea in the lug instanter. I therefore, according to the best advice, so comforted myself that it came to pass in the course of time that we were married; and of my wedded life and experience I intend to treat in this book.

CHAPTER I

Among the last words that my sagacious father said when I took upon me to be the wedded wife of Mr Thrifter were, that a man never throve unless his wife would let, which is a text that I have not forgotten; for though in a way, and in obedience to the customs of the world, women acknowledge men as their head, yet we all know in our hearts that this is but diplomatic. Do not we see that men work for us, which shews that they are our servants? do not we see that men protect us, are they not therefore our soldiers? do not we see that they go hither and yon at our bidding, which shews that they have that within their nature that teaches them to obey? and do not we feel that we have the command of them in all things, just as they had the upper hand in the world till woman was created? No clearer proof do I want that, although in a sense for policy we call ourselves the weaker vessels—and in that very policy there is power—we know well in our hearts that, as the last made creatures, we necessarily are more perfect,

THE GUDEWIFE

and have all that was made before us, by hook or crook, under our thumb. Well does Robin Burns sing of this truth in the song where he has—

“ Her ’prentice hand she tried on man,
And syne she made the lassies oh ! ”

Accordingly, having a proper conviction of the superiority of my sex, I was not long of making Mr Thrifter, my gudeman, to know into what hands he had fallen, by correcting many of the bad habits of body to which he had become addicted in his bachelor loneliness. Among these was a custom that I did think ought not to be continued after he had surrendered himself into the custody of a wife, and that was an usage with him in the morning before breakfast to toast his shoes against the fender and forenent the fire. This he did not tell me till I saw it with my own eyes the morning after we were married, which, when I beheld, gave me a sore heart, because, had I known it before we were everlastingly made one, I will not say but there might have been a dubiety as to the paction; for I have ever had a natural dislike to men who toasted their shoes, thinking it was a hussie fellow’s custom. However, being endowed with an instinct of prudence, I winked at it for some days; but it could not be borne any longer, and I said in a sweet manner, as it were by and by—

“ Dear Mr Thrifter, that servant lass we have gotten has not a right notion of what is a genteel way of living. Do you see how the misleart creature sets up your shoes in the inside of the fender, keeping the warmth from

THE GUDEWIFE

our feet? really I'll thole this no longer; it's not a custom in a proper house. If a stranger were accidentally coming in and seeing your shoes in that situation, he would not think of me as it is well known he ought to think."

Mr Thrifter did not say much, nor could he; for I had judiciously laid all the wyte and blame of the thing to the servant; but he said, in a diffident manner, that it was not necessary to be so particular.

"No necessary! Mr Thrifter, what do you call a particularity, when you would say that toasting shoes is not one? It might do for you when you were a bachelor, but ye should remember that you're so no more, and it's a custom I will not allow."

"But," replied he with a smile, "I am the head of the house; and to make few words about it, I say, Mrs Thrifter, I will have my shoes warmed anyhow, whether or no."

"Very right, my dear," quo' I; "I'll ne'er dispute that you are the head of the house; but I think that you need not make a poor wife's life bitter by insisting on toasting your shoes."

And I gave a deep sigh. Mr Thrifter looked very solemn on hearing this, and as he was a man not void of understanding, he said to me,

"My dawty," said he, "we must not stand on trifles; if you do not like to see my shoes within the parlour fender, they can be toasted in the kitchen."

I was glad to hear him say this; and, ringing the bell, I told the servant-maid at once to take them away and

THE GUDEWIFE

place them before the kitchen fire, well pleased to have carried my point with such debonair sauvity; for if you get the substance of a thing, it is not wise to make a piece of work for the shadow likewise. Thus it happened I was conqueror in the controversy; but Mr Thrifter's shoes have to this day been toasted every morning in the kitchen; and I daresay the poor man is vogie with the thoughts of having gained a victory; for the generality of men have, like parrots, a good conceit of themselves, and cry " Pretty Polly! " when everybody sees they have a crooked neb.

CHAPTER II

But what I have said was nothing to many other calamities that darkened our honeymoon. Mr Thrifter having been a long-keepit bachelor, required a consideration in many things besides his shoes; for men of that stamp are so long accustomed to their own ways that it is not easy to hammer them into docility, far less to make them obedient husbands. So that although he is the best of men, yet I cannot say on my conscience that he was altogether free from an ingrained temper, requiring my canniest hand to manage properly. It could not be said that I suffered much from great faults; but he was fiky, and made more work about trifles that didna just please him than I was willing to conform to. Some excuse, however, might be pleaded for him, because he felt that infirmities were growing upon him, which was the

THE GUDEWIFE

cause that made him think of taking a wife; and I was not in my younger days quite so thoughtful, maybe, as was necessary: for I will take blame to myself, when it would be a great breach of truth in me to deny a fault that could be clearly proven.

Mr Thrifter was a man of great regularity; he went to the shop and did his business there in a most methodical manner; he returned to the house and ate his meals like clockwork; and he went to bed every night at half-past nine o'clock, and slept there like a door nail. In short, all he did and said was as orderly as commodities on chandler pins; but for all that he was at times of a crunkly spirit, fractiously making faults about nothing at all: by which he was neither so smooth as oil nor so sweet as honey to me, whose duty it was to govern him.

At the first outbreking of the original sin that was in him, I was vexed and grieved, watering the plants in the solitude of the room, when he was discoursing on the news of the day with customers in the shop. At last I said to myself, "This will never do; one of two must obey: and it is not in the course of nature that a gude-man should rule a house, which is the province of a wife and becomes her nature to do."

So I set a stout heart to the stey brae, and being near my time with our daughter, I thought it would be well to try how he would put up with a little sample of womanhood. So that day when he came in to his dinner, I was, maybe, more incommoded with my temper than might be, saying to him, in a way as if I could have

THE GUDEWIFE

fought with the wind, that it was very unsettled weather.

“ My dawty,” said he, “ I wonder what would content you! we have had as delightful a week as ever made the sight of the sun heartsome.”

“ Well, but,” said I, “ good weather that is to you may not be so to me; and I say again, that this is most ridiculous weather.”

“ What would you have, my dawty? Is it not known by a better what is best for us? ”

“ Oh,” cried I, “ we can never speak of temporal things but you haul in the grace of the Maker by the lug and the horn. Mr Thrifter, ye should set a watch on the door of your lips; especially as ye have now such a prospect before you of being the father of a family.”

“ Mrs Thrifter,” said he, “ what has that to do with the state of the weather? ”

“ Everything,” said I. “ Isn’t the condition that I am in a visibility that I cannot look after the house as I should do? which is the cause of your having such a poor dinner to-day; for the weather wiled out the servant lass, and she has in consequence not been in the kitchen to see to her duty. Doesn’t that shew you that, to a woman in the state that I am, fine sunshiny weather is no comfort? ”

“ Well,” said he, “ though a shower is at times seasonable, I will say that I prefer days like this.”

“ What you, Mr Thrifter, prefer, can make no difference to me; but I will uphold, in spite of everything you can allege to the contrary, that this is not judicious weather.”

THE GUDWIFE

“ Really now, gudewife,” said Mr Thrifter, “ what need we quarrel about the weather? neither of us can make it better or worse.”

“ That’s a truth,” said I, “ but what need you maintain that dry weather is pleasant weather, when I have made it plain to you that it is a great affliction? And how can you say the contrary? does not both wet and dry come from Providence? Which of them is the evil?—for they should be in their visitations both alike.”

“ Mrs Thrifter,” said he, “ what would you be at, summering and wintering on nothing? ”

Upon which I said, “ Oh, Mr Thrifter, if ye were like me, ye would say anything; for I am not in a condition to be spoken to. I’ll not say that ye’re far wrong, but till my time is a bygone ye should not contradict me so; for I am no in a state to be contradicted: it may go hard with me if I am. So I beg you to think, for the sake of the baby unborn, to let me have my way in all things for a season.”

“ I have no objection,” said he, “ if there is a necessity for complying; but really, gudewife, ye’re at times a wee fashous just now; and this house has not been a corner in the kingdom of heaven for some time.”

Thus, from less to more, our argolbargoling was put an end to; and from that time I was the ruling power in our domicile, which has made it the habitation of quiet ever since; for from that moment I never laid down the rod of authority, which I achieved with such a womanly sleight of hand.

THE GUDEWIFE

CHAPTER III

Though from the time of the conversation recorded in the preceding chapter I was, in a certain sense, the ruling power in our house, as a wedded wife should be, we did not slide down a glassy brae till long after. For though the gudeman in a compassionate manner allowed me to have my own way till my fullness of time was come, I could discern by the tail of my eye that he meditated to usurp the authority again, when he saw a fit time to effect the machination. Thus it came to pass, when I was delivered of our daughter, I had, as I lay on my bed, my own thoughts anent the evil that I saw barming within him; and I was therefore determined to keep the upper hand, of which I had made a conquest with such dexterity, and the breaking down of difficulties.

So when I was some days in a recumbent posture, but in a well-doing way, I said nothing; it made me, however, often grind my teeth in a secrecy when I saw from the bed many a thing that I treasured in remembrance should never be again. But I was very thankful for my deliverance, and assumed a blitheness in my countenance that was far from my heart. In short, I could see that the gudeman, in whose mouth you would have thought sugar would have melted, had from day to day a stratagem in his head subversive of the regency that I had won in my tender state; and as I saw it would never do to let him have his own will, I had recourse to the usual diplomaticals of womankind.

THE GUDEWIFE

It was a matter before the birth that we settled, him and me, that the child should be baptized on the eighth day after, in order that I might be up and a partaker of the ploy; which, surely, as the mother, I was well entitled to. But from what I saw going on from the bed and jaloused, it occurred to me that the occasion should be postponed, and according as Mr Thrifter should give his consent, or withhold it, I should comport myself; determined, however, I was to have the matter postponed, just to ascertain the strength and durability of what belonged to me.

On the fifth day I, therefore, said to him, as I was sitting in the easy chair by the fire, with a cod at my shoulders and my mother's fur cloak about me—the baby was in a cradle close by, but not rocking, for the keeper said it was yet too young—and sitting, as I have said, Mr Thrifter forenent me, “ My dear,” said I, “ it will never do to have the christening on the day we said.”

“ What for no? ” was the reply; “ isn't it a very good day? ”

So I, seeing that he was going to be upon his peremptors, replied, with my usual meekness, “ No human being, my dear, can tell what sort of day it will be; but be it good or be it bad, the christening is not to be on that day.”

“ You surprise me! ” said he, “ I considered it a settled point, and have asked Mr Sweetie, the grocer, to come to his tea.”

“ Dear me! ” quo' I; “ ye should not have done that

THE GUDEWIFE

without my consent; for although we set the day before my time was come, it was not then in the power of man to say how I was to get through; and therefore it was just a talk we had on the subject, and by no manner of means a thing that could be fixed."

"In some sort," said Mr Thrifter, "I cannot but allow that you are speaking truth; but I thought that the only impediment to the day was your illness. Now you have had a most blithe time o't, and there is nothing in the way of an obstacle."

"Ah, Mr Thrifter!" said I, "it's easy for you, who have such a barren knowledge of the nature of women, so to speak, but I know that I am no in a condition to have such a handling as a christening; and besides, I have a scruple of conscience well worth your attention concerning thesame—and it's my opinion, formed in the watches of the night, when I was in my bed, that baby should be christened in the kirk on the Lord's day."

"Oh," said he, "that's but a fashion, and you'll be quite well by the eighth; the howdie told me that ye had a most pleasant time o't, and cannot be ill on the eighth day."

I was just provoked into contumacy to hear this; for to tell a new mother that childbirth is a pleasant thing, set me almost in a passion; and I said to him that he might entertain Mr Sweetie himself, for that I was resolved the christening should not be as had been set.

In short, from less to more, I gained my point; as, indeed, I always settled it in my own mind before broach-

THE GUDEWIFE

ing the subject: first, by letting him know that I had latent pains, which made me very ill, though I seemed otherwise; and, secondly, that it was very hard, and next to a martyrdom, to be controverted in religion, as I would be if the bairn was baptized anywhere but in the church.

CHAPTER IV

In due time the christening took place in the kirk, as I had made a point of having; and for some time after we passed a very happy married life. Mr Thrifter saw that it was of no use to contradict me, and in consequence we lived in great felicity, he never saying nay to me; and I, as became a wife in the rightful possession of her prerogatives, was most condescending. But still he shewed, when he durst, the bull-horn; and would have meddled with our householdry, to the manifest detriment of our conjugal happiness, had I not continued my interdict in the strictest manner. In truth, I was all the time grievously troubled with nursing Nance, our daughter, and could not take the same pains about things that I otherwise would have done; and it is well known that husbands are like mice, that know when the cat is out of the house or her back turned, they take their own way: and I assure the courteous reader, to say no ill of my gudeman, that he was one of the mice genus.

But at last I had a trial that was not to be endured with such a composity as if I had been a black snail. It came to pass that our daughter was to be weaned, and

THE GUDEWIFE

on the day settled—a Sabbath day—we had, of course, much to do, for it behoved in this ceremony that I should keep out of sight; and keeping out of sight it seemed but reasonable, considering his parentage to the wean, that Mr Thrifter should take my place. So I said to him in the morning that he must do so, and keep Nance for that day; and, to do the poor man justice, he consented at once, for he well knew that it would come to nothing to be contrary.

So I went to the kirk, leaving him rocking the cradle and singing hush, ba! as he saw need. But oh, dule! scarcely had I left the house when the child screamed up in a panic, and would not be pacified. He thereupon lifted it out of the cradle, and with it in his arms went about the house; but it was such a roaring buckie that for a long time he was like to go distracted. Over what ensued I draw the curtain, and must only say that, when I came from the church, there he was, a spectacle, and as sour as a crab apple, blaming me for leaving him with such a devil.

I was really woeful to see him, and sympathised in the most pitiful manner with him, on account of what had happened; but the more I condoled with him the more he would not be comforted, and for all my endeavours to keep matters in a propriety, I saw my jurisdiction over the house was in jeopardy; and every now and then the infant cried out, just as if it had been laid upon a heckle. Oh! such a day as that was for Mr Thrifter, when he heard the tyrant bairn shrieking like mad, and

THE GUDEWIFE

every now and then drumming with its wee feetie like desperation, he cried,

“ For the love of God, give it a drop of the breast! or it will tempt me to wring off its ankles or its head.”

But I replied composedly that it could not be done, for the wean must be speant, and what he advised was evendown nonsense.

“ What has come to pass, both my mother and other sagacious carlines told me I had to look for; and so we must bow the head of resignation to our lot. You’ll just,” said I, “ keep the bairn this afternoon; it will not be a long fashery.”

He said nothing, but gave a deep sigh.

At this moment the bells of the kirk were ringing for the afternoon’s discourse, and I lifted my bonnet to put it on and go; but ere I knew where I was, Mr Thrifter was out of the door and away, leaving me alone with the torment in the cradle, which the bells at that moment wakened: and it gave a yell that greatly discomposed me.

Once awa and aye awa, Mr Thrifter went into the fields, and would not come back when I lifted the window and called to him, but walked faster and faster, and was a most demented man; so that I was obligated to stay at home, and would have had my own work with the termagant baby if my mother had not come in and advised me to give it sweetened rum and water for a pacificator.

THE GUDEWIFE

CHAPTER V

Mr Thrifter began in time to be a very complying husband, and we had, after the trial of the weaning, no particular confabulation; indeed he was a very reasonable man, and had a rightful instinct of the reverence that is due to the opinion of a wife of discernment. I do not think, to the best of my recollection, that between the time Nance was weaned till she got her walking shoes and was learning to walk, that we had a single controversy; nor can it be said that we had a great ravelment on that occasion. Indeed, saving our daily higling about trifles not worth remembering, we passed a pleasant life. But when Nance came to get her first walking shoes, that was a catastrophe well worthy of being rehearsed for her behoof now.

It happened that for some months before, she had, in place of shoes, red worsted socks; but as she began, from the character of her capering, to kithe that she was coming to her feet, I got a pair of yellow slippers for her; and no mother could take more pains than I did to learn her how to handle her feet. First, I tried to teach her to walk by putting a thimble or an apple beyond her reach, at least a chair's breadth off; and then I endeavoured to make the cutty run from me to her father, across the hearth, and he held out his hands to catch her.

This, it will be allowed, was to us pleasant pastime. But it fell out one day, when we were diverting our-

THE GUDEWIFE

selves by making Nance run to and fro between us across the hearth, that the glaiket baudrons chanced to see the seal of her father's watch glittering, and, in coming from him to me, she drew it after her, as if it had been a turnip. He cried, "Oh, Christal and——" I lifted my hands in wonderment; but the tottling creature, with no more sense than a sucking turkey, whirled the watch—the Almighty knows how!—into the fire, and giggled as if she had done an exploit.

"Take it out with the tongs," said I.

"She's an ill-brought-up wean," cried he.

The short and the long of it was, before the watch could be got out, the heat broke the glass and made the face of it dreadful; besides, he wore a riband chain—that was in a blaze before we could make a redemption.

When the straemash was over, I said to him that he could expect no better by wearing his watch in such a manner.

"It is not," said he, "the watch that is to blame, but your bardy bairn that ye have spoiled in the bringing up."

"Mr Thrifter," quo' I, "this is not a time for up-braiding; for if ye mean to insinuate anything to my disparagement, it is what I will not submit to."

"E'en as you like, my dawty," said he; "but what I say is true—that your daughter will just turn out a randy like her mother."

"What's that ye say?" quo' I, and I began to wipe my eyes with the corner of my shawl—saying in a path-

THE GUDEWIFE

etic manner, " If I am a randy, I ken who has made me one."

" Ken," said he, " Ken! everybody kens that ye are like a clubby foot, made by the hand of God, and passed the remede of doctors."

Was not this most diabolical to hear? Really my corruption rose at such blasphemy; and starting from my seat, I put my hands on my haunches, and gave a stamp with my foot that made the whole house dirl: " What does the man mean? " said I.

But he replied with a composity as if he had been in liquor, saying, with an ill-faured smile, " Sit down, my dawty; you'll do yourself a prejudice if ye allow your passion to get the better of you."

Could mortal woman thole the like of this; it stunned me speechless, and for a time I thought my authority knocked on the head. But presently the spirit that was in my nature mustered courage, and put a new energy within me, which caused me to say nothing, but to stretch out my feet, and stiffen back, with my hands at my sides, as if I was a dead corpse. Whereupon the good man ran for a tumbler of water to jaup on my face; but when he came near me in this posture, I dauded the glass of water in his face, and drummed with my feet and hands in a delirious manner, which convinced him that I was going by myself. Oh, but he was in an awful terrification! At last, seeing his fear and contrition, I began to moderate, as it seemed; which made him as softly and kindly as if I had been a true frantic woman;

THE GUDEWIFE

which I was not, but a practiser of the feminine art, to keep the ruling power.

Thinking by my state that I was not only gone daft, but not without the need of soothing, he began to ask my pardon in a proper humility, and with a most pitiful penitence. Whereupon I said to him, that surely he had not a rightful knowledge of my nature: and then he began to confess a fault, and was such a dejected man that I took the napkin from my eyes and gave a great guffaw, telling him that surely he was silly daft and gi'en to pikery, if he thought he could daunton me. "No, no, Mr Thrifter," quo' I, "while I live, and the iron tongs are by the chumly lug, never expect to get the upper hand of me."

From that time he was as bidable a man as any reasonable woman could desire; but he gave a deep sigh, which was a testificate to me that the leaven of unrighteousness was still within him, and might break out into treason and rebellion if I was not on my guard.

Fraser's Magazine, December 1833.

VIII

THE MEM:

From the papers of the late
Rev. MICAH BALWHIDDER of Dalmailing

THE MEM

MISS PEERIE, the schoolmistress, was, about sixty years ago, the most beautiful young woman in our town; her father was headmaster of the grammar-school, and she excelled every young lady far and near in accomplishments. She danced, but it was only not to appear above human nature; everybody who saw her had no adjective by which her beauty could be described; Greek and Latin were to her household words, and she could read Hebrew as easily as if it had been the A B C.

She was then blooming: the epithet bonny was never applied to a more suitable subject, and her temper was as mellow as her looks were sweet. She had such a sleight in dressing that everything she wore seemed to grow better on her than on any other young lady; and on her every pattern, no matter how old-fashioned, seemed to improve in gaiety and beauty.

But marriages are made in heaven, and fortune is not at man's bidding. Years have passed away, her beauty departed, and her still more delightful temper become all odds and ends, like the contents of a wisdom bag. Had the boldest soothsayer foretold her fate in that blithesome time, he would have been derided as envious and malignant; nor was it in the heart of man to imagine that she would ever become the lonely inhabitant of a garret-room, and exercise the rod of authority over

THE MEM

negligent and giggling misses. And yet such came to pass: she lived in an attic, and followed the patient and penurious bread-making of a schoolmistress, until her failing sight obliged her to give up the teaching of white seam with the hieroglyphicals of the sampler, and to addict herself in the twilight of old age entirely to the knitting of stockings. But the course of life with Miss Peerie, if we except her schoolmistressing, was not uncommon; though the world withholds its sympathy from many that equally deserve it. She was the victim of disappointments, and a low winter sun dawned upon her lot, which through all her day has only served to shew its bleakness.

But I am anticipating the results of a sad and simple tale. I cannot, however, refrain from saying as much when speaking of the sunny days of my youth, and remembering the flowers that bloomed in my path with such loveliness.

The first misfortune that fell on Miss Peerie was the death of her father. He was a learned, erect, and accurate man—the whole presbytery acknowledged that he had not his equal among them for a recondite knowledge of those ancient mysteries, which make many men learned merely by knowing that they were once believed. But, above all, he was celebrated for the method with which he had transmitted all his lore to his glad and gamboling daughter, his only child, without leading her to imagine that she possessed any talent above her companions.

THE MEM

He died when she was on the threshold of life, and from that moment an increasing blight was evidently upon her. Before her mournings were well worn, the poor widow, her mother, who had never lifted her head from the hour of the master's death, pined away in unspeakable sorrow, and left the orphan exposed to the trials and tribulations of a harsh and hard-hearted world.

But soon after her death, Peter Rattlings, the mate of a ship called the "Sea-Flower," which traded to Virginia, made up to Miss Peerie, and promised when he returned to make her his wife: but he never returned. Soon after he sailed, the wind blew, the rain fell, and in a dismal night the gallant "Sea-Flower" foundered off the Tuscar, when all hands perished.

The sad tidings of this disaster, coming on the heels of the loss that the winsome maiden had sustained by the removal of her mother, was a grief that could not be soon mastered. She was so long off laughing in her young manner that she forgot the way of it; and the rosy hue of her cheek vanished for ever like the sunbeams of the evening, which tinge the pale cloud once and never glow on it again.

Everybody in the town sympathised with the poor afflicted Miss Peerie; and ladies in the country, to whom her name till that time was unknown, sent her many a kind present; but she grew more woeful and sequestered every day. Some said (as I shall never forget) that grief made her raven locks untimely grey; but it was the

THE MEM

thought that anxiety was mingled with her sorrow, for when time softened her grief, and bred negligence in those that felt for her distress, she became very poor; and if she had not plucked up a wonderful resolution for one so broken-hearted, she would have outlived the sympathies of all who knew her.

In her extremity, a courage, by common consent, was lent to her; and she consulted Mrs Psalmody, the minister's wife, about taking up a school to earn her crumb. In this matter the lady gave her great heart, and advised her to teach the young ladies of the town to read the Scriptures in Hebrew with the Greek Testament—things which were greatly wanted among them, no one knowing an alpha from a beta; but Miss Peerie herself was more moderate in her ideas, and said to Mrs Psalmody, that as all the young ladies of the burgh were ordained to be men's wives, it would be more conciliatory if she would just undertake to teach them plain work.

Thus it came to pass, upon consulting the minister upon the subject, that Miss Peerie should take up a school of the discreet latter kind, and let it be known that she would give private lessons in Hebrew to those misses that were desirous of reading the Scriptures in the original. Accordingly Miss Peerie took up a school of plain-work, in which she was surely a great teacher; for all the young ladies, gentle and simple, were sent to her school, some to make shirts, others to hem neck-cloths and to work stockings, with various items of household drudgery. It said, however, very little for

THE MEM

the wisdom of their parents, that not one of the young ladies was sent to learn Hebrew.

Well was it (for thin and pale Miss Peerie was then grown) that the thought was put into her head to take up a school. I remember at the time it was said that if the Provost's lady had not sent with her three daughters a beforehand payment of the school wage, by which a good example was set to other folk, she would not have been able to have fought so bravely with her circumstances; as on the Saturday night before she opened her school, which was on the Monday morning, she had nothing to put in the basin, and was obligated to borrow a handful of meal and a reisted herring to get over the Sabbath day. Her lines, poor thing! had not fallen on pleasant places; but for all that, she received a modicum of human pity, and many that were thought of ne'er-begun dispositions shed a tear when it was reported that she had been so destitute.

From the time she took up her school it could not be said that she was in absolute want, for James Plane, the carpenter, told my father in my own hearing that, to his certain knowledge, Miss Peerie was making money, and had seventeen pound gathering in the bank; which was wonderful to hear of, as she had been only then one-and-twenty years a schoolmistress. But I should mention, that all the ladies that had been her first scholars made a point of sending their daughters to learn everything that Miss Peerie taught in public. Once she had, also, two scholars, preijnt misses, the daughters of an

THE MEM

Englischer that had a post in the government about our custom-house, at her private class learning French (which Miss Peerie taught in the most perfect manner); but their father would not hear of them learning Hebrew or mathematical, though it was well known that Miss Peerie was as capable of teaching them as any professor in a college.

Well do I recollect when it was known that Miss Peerie had money in the bank, that the story ran about like wildfire, and received from all who spoke of it great augmentation; insomuch, that the very lowest sum any one thought it worth their while to name was hundreds of pounds, and she in consequence was reputed to be a rich and miserly woman; for by this time, as I have said, she was more than forty years of age, and had a pinched and peeping look, as if she stinted herself in the sanctified uses of the necessaries of life. But for all that, the rumour of her wealth spread far and wide, and was not without an effect; for mankind, hearing that she was so bien, laid their heads together concerning her treasure, and sent divers wooers to Miss Peerie because of her purse. She, however, was not to be easily won; only Colin Pennyton was not so soon turned away of his own accord, for he remembered the proverb that says "faint heart never won fair lady," and thought by sticking to her he would carry the day.

Of this Colin Pennyton I cannot speak much of a certainty from my own knowledge of the man; but he was thirteen years older than Miss Peerie, and had, it was

THE MEM

said, a purse of his own that he could shake in the teeth of a north-east blast. He was in his looks more elderly than those who had been brought up with him said he was; particularly Miss Babby M'Cun, who made a point of telling on all occasions, that he was a much younger man than the gossipry of the town would let him be. But Miss Babby's remonstrances were not much heeded, for it was recollected that they were both christened on the same afternoon in the Auld Kirk; which was a plain proof that she had an interest in keeping him young, as she herself was far from despairing of making some honest man's life bitter—for she was, to her latter days, a most controverting woman.

Colin, as we have said, adhered to Miss Peerie with the tenacity of a sticking-plaster; but it would not do: for some day, in the mirk of the night, she had made a vow to live and die in single blessedness, which she did in the most abstemious manner perform; and Colin in the end, seeing he had no hope, gave up his vain pursuit, while Miss Peerie continued to keep a school in unmolested tranquility.

It happened, however, that notwithstanding she had done all in the power of a prudent and parsimonious person to do, her sphere, little as she made it, could not be considered altogether a nonentity; for she met with rubs, and had her share of misfortunes over and above the great calamities that I have rehearsed. It therefore behoves me to tell the courteous reader, that the way of her life was not favourable to the growth of her under-

THE MEM

standing; for as she waxed older she grew more penurious, and by the time she had reached her fifties she was a meagre sister, and not prized for the capacity of her judgment. But there was a nerve in her that well deserves to be laid open to public commendation, though in the end to herself it was a great loss, and became the parent of many afflictions.

The regular teaching of her school was over on the Saturdays by twelve o'clock, and all the afternoon the scholars had for play, while the Mem was known to be very busy setting her house in order. She did this in a most excellent manner, and in the doing of it went about the business cannily and cautiously, as became her looks and her character. But one day, when she was in her fifties, she took the rheumatics in her back; and not being able to stoop as she was wont, she became fain to ask some of the biggest lassies to assist her in the Saturday afternoon's thrift. At last it came into her head that she would make the house-cleaning one of the tasks of her school, and teach rambling misses how to set about it. Accordingly she enacted that they should in turns do her work for a lesson every Saturday, that they might get an insight of that business.

Thus it was brought to a come-to-pass that she not only spared herself from the toil of rubbing and scrubbing, but got some additional wage for teaching how a house should be cleaned; by which she earned, it was said, a good penny.

When she first gave notice of her intent to make it an

THE MEM

edifying branch of education, every mother that had a daughter was delighted with the scheme; and the whole lot of the scholars pressed forward to be taken into what was called the domestic class. The thought, therefore, though begotten of necessity, was, by the natural cleverness of Miss Peerie's thoughtful mind, turned to a profitable account.

It was not, however, all clear profit that she made by it; for either there were too many of the misses at one time employed, by which there was bred anarchy and confusion, or others of them were not so circumspect in the task as they should have been.

Miss Peerie had in her room a dresser, and above that dresser a few shelves, on which she was in the habit of putting her plates on rim, with their faces to the public; making, I will say, a very goodly show, especially when she put before each a knife and fork and well-cleaned pewter spoon that had been her father's, and for many a year retained by her as an honesty. Upon this dresser there was placed a row of tea-pots, pouries, tea-cups, and other utensils with handles, making an apparition of great wealth in such sort of things; and the misses, when they set the house in order, never forgot to wash and arrange them: but in doing this, being young heedless creatures, they did not pay due attention to these idols, and the consequence was that one day when the Mem, as they called her, happened to be on an inspection, she saw with unutterable astonishment that havoc had been busy among these precious vessels. Few of

THE MEM

the cups were without flaws or cracks; the teapot-lids were mutilated in their nipples; the noses of the pouries had suffered great damage; and there was a china bowl ruined for ever by a piece broken out of the lip, which the cunning cutties placed with the broken side to the wall.

At first Miss Peerie, greatly grieved at such destruction, examined the last squad, one by one, concerning the calamity. But they all said that the disasters had taken place before their time, and that they had only made the nicest arrangement that was in their power to do, by placing the damaged articles in such a way as to hide their blemishes.

In the examination, Miss Marigold stood up uncalled for, and testified to the truth of this evidence, shewing that the broken bowl must have met with the detriment a long time ago; for if Miss Peerie would examine the edge of the injury she would see the fact, for it was all dirty, as breaks are that have been of a long standing.

Miss Peerie gave heed to her words, and examined the broken bowl; when she saw, sure enough, that the edge of the crack was very dirty, and had an old appearance, as the young lady so philosophically described it should be. But upon looking still closer, she discovered that all the broken edge was not of equal age, particularly in one part, where an unblemished spot clearly proved to her understanding that the bowl had received its wound very recently: and so, by a cogent process of reasoning, she deduced from the premises that Miss Marigold was

THE MEM

art and part in the guilt of the breakage; which, after much questioning, the young lady was forced to confess, and then pay for the damage.

Well do I recollect how Miss Peerie told my mother of this stratagem when I was writing at the scrutoire; and she foretold that this device of Miss Marigold argued no great things for her future conduct. But the most extraordinary accident in her recital was, that she told the machination with a laugh that made my mother afterwards say, "Miss Peerie was not beyond the efficacy of mirth."

In the meantime Miss Peerie was waxing old, and growing well stricken in years, to which her frugal and sedentary way offered no obstacle; so that she in time became an old woman bent into a hoop, and leaning upon a staff, with her head bound with a black silk handkerchief, and her apron shewing the folds for days after she had taken it out of them. In truth she was a wonderful woman, from ever after the time she came to years of discretion and was left friendless on the wide world; to those that considered her case she was something more than common. Indeed, Miss Peerie had in all her days, and especially towards her latter end, been very unlike the generality of the daughters of men, taking her own course quietly in the bypaths of life; and was, to speak truly of her, a woman out of the world and yet in it.

At first her forlorn condition made her constant sadness not remarkable: it seemed, in the opinion of everybody, natural and becoming; and though many condoled

THE MEM

at the way she lived aloof, none thought that she could be drawn from her retirement. Maybe they were right; but they made no effort, and the poor woman was habituated to neglect long before those that were to blame suspected themselves of committing any wrong towards her. Thus she was far above the thirties before it was thought that the carelessness of her neighbours had been in any degree the cause of her loneliness. She was far advanced in life when it was by-hand noticed, and it had grown into a second nature with her, that would not be altered; but in all the time there was never the slightest tint of imputation against the purity of her behaviour, only when she was grown old people spoke of her conduct as little like that of the common world, and made a marvel of her strangeness, which began in grief and was cherished with melancholy.

Miss Peerie was a very interesting creature with me, for although she was born in a time that made her much my senior, yet there was a recluse patience about her very unlike the garishness of the world. I never saw her but she made me sorrowful; for her face was pale, and her eyes often so bright, that she had a spirituality sometimes about her that no one could see and withstand, without feeling a melting compassion in his bosom.

In the Sabbath evenings, when all nature was sedate, and the sounds both of the blacksmith's hammer and the wheels of the waggon and market-cart were at rest, Miss Peerie might be seen walking by herself by the

THE MEM

river side, or meditating among the whins on the green. As long as I recollect, this was the case. Every one that saw her spoke in passing by, and her words in answer were few and well chosen; but they gave no encouragement to any communion.

Sometimes she took a cup of tea with divers of her acquaintance; but gradually, as if it was a rule she had laid down for herself, she abstained from going to their houses, and they ceased to wonder at her absence.

At last the rheumatics in her legs put an end to her solitary walks, and her narrow course was in consequence confined to her room; where, when the winter raged without, she had a small fire—just a pinch of chips and coals that, to folks used to galravaging, would have made the cold sensible. But she was content with the spunk, and sat alone all night beside it, sometimes with spread hands cowering over the flames, reading a book by the light of her cruise, and heaping up knowledge that it was plain to all that saw her could never be put to use in this world; in the next, all worldly wisdom is foolishness, as is well known.

One Sunday afternoon, when it was rather rainy, there came on a shower just as I passed her close mouth; and remembering her, I took the benefit of the wet to shelter there. Being constrained to wait longer than I expected, it came into my head to go upstairs and inquire for her. No doubt it was a fool thought of me so to do, for I was but slenderly acquainted with the ailing woman: we knew, however, each other well enough for

THE MEM

need to give me the privilege. So I went up the wooden stair. I mind the place; it was very dark, and had a ravel of rope, useful to the lame and the aged in going up and down.

When I had reached her door, instead of rapping with my knuckle before entering, as maybe I should have done, in I went at once, and there was the clean, respectable-looking old woman taking her tea, beside her spark of fire. She had for her table a big stool, with a finger hole in the middle of it; and for her teapot, notwithstanding the grand row on her dresser, she had a coarse, stumpy, brick-coloured commodity, that held enough, no doubt, for one. But when I told her what had driven me in, she invited me to take a cup with her, and the track pot was in consequence obliged that night to serve two; but her tea was very thin, and she had her small condiment of sugar in a tea cup, that shewed nothing was allowed for waste.

After I had solaced myself with her frugal beverage, the rain continuing to blatter on the windows, she made an endeavour to converse with me concerning many things, such as the Trojan war, and Numa Pompilius, a king of Rome, wherein she gave me a sample of the lore that she had learned from her father. But she was not like an earthly creature, for her mind ran on old things, such as the building of the pyramids of Egypt, and Queen Cleopatra, and Isaac and Abraham, the fathers and founders of the Israelitish people.

Saving that accidental visit, which was most interest-

THE MEM

ing, I never had a specimen of the great learning that she inherited from her father. She was, however, a dungeon of wit, and made no brag of what she knew.

Soon after that visit she was constrained to give up her school, and to prepare herself for another and a better world, which made me very woeful to hear; for though it could not be said that her life was barren of utility, as she taught the daughters of many mothers thrift and good conduct, it was sad to think that all her days were just a struggle to flee from the fangs of famine.

The only good fortune that befel this innocent creature was that death did not make her latter end a kittle case, but stopped her breath in a sudden cough, when she had no complaint but the pains in her knees and ankles; and, fortunately, this happened when the misses were coming in the morning to school, so that she did not die unseen, as many feared she would do.

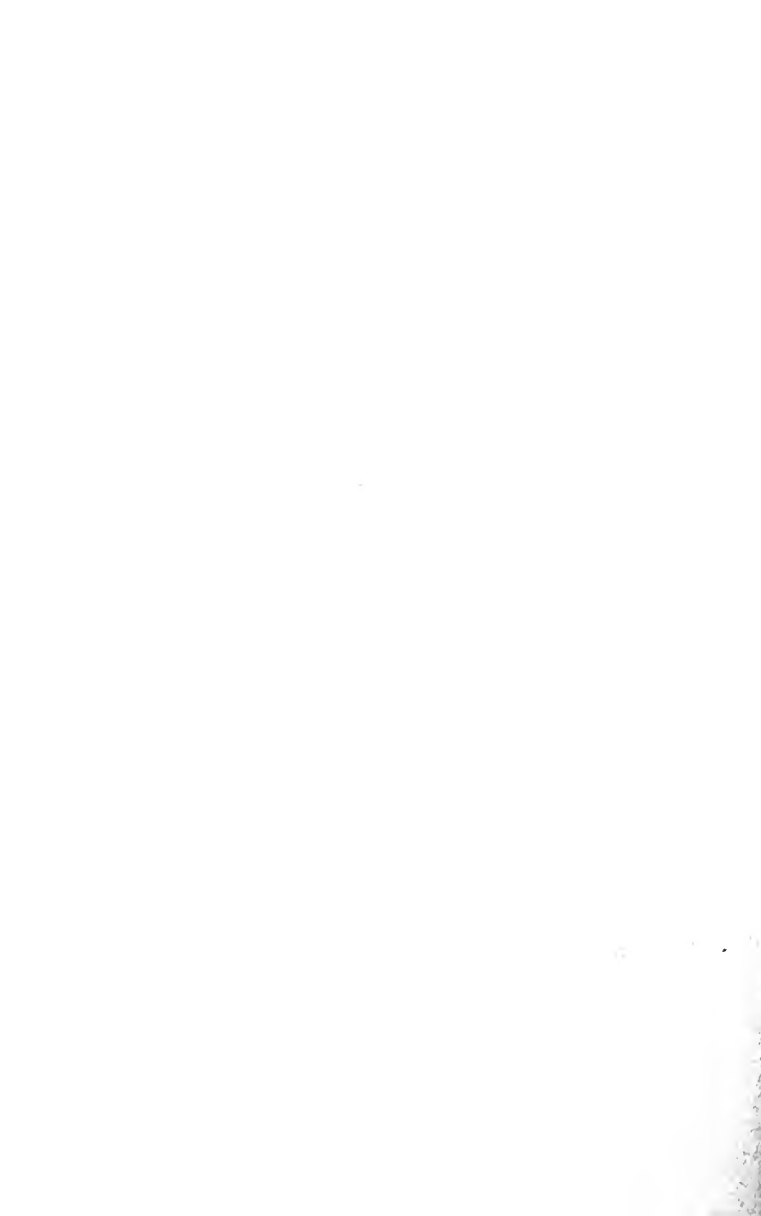
Dreadful was the cry made by her scholars when they saw that she was dead. Some ran home, others to the doctor's shop; but it was all in vain—the unblemished soul of Miss Peerie had taken the wings of the morning and flown into Abraham's bosom. Great was the lamentation that ensued. Mothers wondered what they would do with their daughters, and really were in as great an affliction as if they all had been marriageable. However, their grief was not of a durable nature, and was soon forgotten when Miss Peerie was laid in the churchyard. But still she has been a mystery to me. For what

THE MEM

use was knowledge and instruction given to her? I ponder when I think of it, but have no answer to the question.

Fraser's Magazine, August 1834.

IX
THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT



THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

EVERY man has his own reasons for emigrating, so had I: but I think that, by relating the events of my own life, the reader will have a better idea of them than by any other account I can give; I will, therefore, without delay, relate the incidents that led to, and those which followed after, my emigration.

I was bred by my father in the haberdashery line, and was by him installed in a shop in the Borough, with a due assortment of goods; but, after a few days, I perceived that there was some vacancy in my household; long was I before I discovered what this want was—indeed it was not I that found it out, but Miss Barbara Putty, my cousin, who one day, for the first time, deigned to enter my shop: the very first observation she made was—

“Cousin, you want a wife.”

“Indeed, I think I do,” replied I, in a demure tone; for much did I dread lest my not having thought of it before might have been deemed by Miss Barbara an insult to the sex, represented in her person: however, my forebodings were, happily, not realised, for nothing more was said until the departure of the stale damsel, when she exclaimed, in an intended jocular tone,

“Cousin Stephen, I shall call next month on your

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

bride, whom I hope to find in the person of Miss Amelia Sprat; ” and adding in a lower tone, “ who will have three hundred pounds fortune.”

My want was thus explained, and I forthwith conned over my list of female friends, and the one I thought would suit me best was the identical Miss Amelia Sprat, the daughter of a plump, rosy-faced fishmonger. That very evening I shut shop full an hour before the usual time, and proceeded to Mr Sprat’s, whom I found busily engaged in his own concerns; but, as I had screwed myself up to the sticking-place, I at once said that, as I had an important communication to make, I would be much obliged by his giving me a private interview.

He at once ordered his boy to attend to the business, and, having taken me into a small room, desired me to acquaint him with what I had to say, as he was very busy, and wanted to get back.

“ Mr Sprat,” answered I, “ I have found that an essential article is wanted in my household, and ”——

“ Oh,” interrupted he, “ you want a wife, I suppose,”

“ Exactly so,” continued I; “ and in your amiable daughter I think I have discovered the person I should wish to espouse.”

“ Very well,” said he, “ if she agrees I will not withhold my consent; so there’s the parlour-door, and Amelia’s within.”

All went well—I was married, and my cousin, Miss Barbara Putty, fulfilled her prediction; moreover, staid

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

the remainder of the day with us, during which she enlightened my wife on sundry points of domestic economy, and in the craft of household management.

For some time things went on better than I had ever anticipated, and, by degrees, I was led into speculations in various kinds of haberdashery, pronounced so many gold mines; but it is wonderful that they all, without exception, turned out losses, to the great detriment of my purse and temper, for, as things grew worse, I am told that I became remarkably crabbed and peevish.

One day as I was standing behind my counter, two elderly gentlemen came in and asked permission to wait for a little, till it had ceased raining, as it was at the time very wet: of course I complied, and handed them seats. After a little they began to converse about the Canadas, and, having been but little instructed about foreign countries, I listened attentively to what they were saying, which was, as near as I can recollect, to the following effect :—

“ I think, Mr Brown,” said he who seemed the elder of the two, “ that I shall soon emigrate myself, things are becoming worse every day, and I believe that the States of the Canadas are now the best place for a poor man; and, if I mistake not, they will soon receive many of the poor bankrupt tradesmen and others who find themselves sinking lower every day.”

“ Ah, Mr Millman,” answered the other with a smile, “ both you and I are too old to think of it now; we could not change our habits so much as to be able to endure the

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

privations of the backwoods: emigration appears to me fitted chiefly for the lower orders and those who have no fixed habits; but I agree with you in thinking that Canada is the place for the poor tradesmen of this country."

"My opinion," replied Mr Millman, "is, that those tradesmen who are going on the high road to ruin, could do no better than, instead of selling their goods at half-price, carry out their merchandise with them to Canada, and begin business again."

This advice appeared to me very judicious, and from that time I commenced revolving in my own mind what I had heard about this land of refuge, and likewise endeavoured to inform myself better on the subject, whereby it was soon noised abroad that I, Stephen Needles, was going to emigrate; and among other circumstances arising from this report, was the following, which serves as an instance of the manner in which I was induced to buy things, which were afterwards found to fetch no advance of price equivalent to the cost of carriage, and, in some instances they were a total loss—

One day I was seated in my little parlour by myself, making up my accounts, when my shop-boy came in and said that a person wanted to speak to me; I desired him to be shewn in; he was a tall, sallow-faced, roguish-looking man of about thirty-five years of age, but wearing a wig. I handed him a chair, and requested him to explain his business.

"Why," said he, "I am a stranger in London, and, to tell the truth, somewhat in want of the needful, and,

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

therefore, compelled to dispose of some worsted I was going to have taken out to Canada, where there is at present an enormous price given for it, and which is not likely for some time to abate; but, as I said before, I am in want of the money to take me out there, and therefore, obliged to part with it, though it is with great unwillingness, as I know I could realise a great sum by it in America; but hearing in the neighbourhood that you were thinking of emigrating, I thought you would be willing to take it at prime cost."

"Very well, Sir," I answered, "if your commodity is good, maybe I will purchase some of it."

Accordingly he shewed me a sample he had brought in his pocket, and, after some bargaining, I agreed to give five guineas for all he had, if it was of the same quality; and, very soon after, a box full was brought, which was very good looking, therefore I paid the money, and away he went, reiterating his regret at being obliged to part with it, and leaving me in an ecstasy of delight at the fortune I was to make by it, and the variety of other things I was going to take out with me; for I had now resolved to emigrate.

I therefore stuck up printed hand-bills in my shop-windows, that contained a great deal about "prodigious sacrifices," "great catch," etc.; and in a few days disposed of all the things I did not intend to take with me.

Everything went on as well as I could wish; and I sailed on the 10th of July, in the ship "Providence," from London for Quebec, with a great assortment of goods.

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

With respect to our voyage, I will say nothing—neither about my own sickness and fears, nor those of Amelia; but will merely state that, after a wearisome voyage of seven weeks, we arrived at the capital of Lower Canada. I was sitting sick in my cabin when we came within sight of Quebec. My wife, who was then on deck, suddenly came running down, and cried in my ear: “ Oh! Stephen, Stephen, we’ll grow rich in no time, for the houses are all covered with silver.”

Never did any pill or lotion act on a sufferer with such mitigation of pain as this intelligence did on me. I bounced like a piece of Indian rubber from my seat, and was on deck in a twinkling of an eye, followed by my triumphant consort; and verily I did think that she had not surpassed the truth, for the rays of the sun were glancing on the roofs of the houses in a manner that made my heart leap at having arrived at this land of wealth.

Without saying a word, I took Amelia by the arm, and led her down again, when we commenced agitating what we would do when we had got rich. We had just come to the conclusion of returning home, and cutting a great figure—I was to be made lord mayor, and a great many other fine things—when a loud voice shouted down into where we were seated, “ If you want to go ashore, there’s a boat along-side.”

Up we got, eager to put our feet on this land of silver; and as we stepped out, I saw half a dollar lying on the wharf, close to my wife, whom I told to pick it up.

“ Pick up that,” said she scornfully; “ do you think I

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

would stoop to pick up that," and gave it a touch with her toe that sent it spinning into the water.

I certainly did not approve of such conduct, but kept my sentiments to myself; and she had soon the mortification of knowing that she had thrown away real silver, while her eyes were bewitched with glittering tin.

I can assure you we returned much downcast to the vessel, after we had secured lodgings in one of the inns; and the country was greatly deteriorated in our eyes by the discovery of the false glittering of the dwellings. Indeed, we soon saw that the people had to work as hard in Canada as in the old country.

We did not remain long in Quebec; for I was dissuaded from opening shop there by being told that the market was decidedly overstocked, and was advised to go to some of the new settlements, where I would be able to drive a prodigious trade. I therefore determined to set off the next Monday, being the second we had spent in the "false city," as my wife denominated Quebec, giving orders for the construction of an enormous beef-steak pie.

Monday turned out, to our delight, a very fine day, and we started by six in the morning in a vehicle denominated a wagon; which name, however, I cannot say I think appropriate. We were accompanied by three veritable wagons, containing part of our luggage; the other part of which I had agreed with the man to be sent after me.

When we travelled several hours, we began to feel the

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

admonitions of hunger; and we therefore resolved to breakfast at the place where we then were, as no inn was in view. So, having got it out of the wagon, we placed the ponderous pie on the ground, and satisfied the cravings of nature. Then we spread a cloth over it, while we went to look after the rest of our train, which was just appearing in sight.

We found no damage of a serious nature had befallen our articles; and we, therefore, prepared to re-enter our conveyance, when Amelia recollected our provisions, and ran to fetch the pie; with which she soon returned and placed it upon the seat, while we got in; which we had barely accomplished, when we perceived the cloth moving.

“What can it be?” said my wife, putting down her hand to lift it. She had hardly touched it when a hiss was heard beneath, and a snake began to crawl up her arm. She gave such a terrific scream that the horse took fright, and setting off at full speed, ran foul of a stump, and precipitated us, snake and all, to the ground.

“Ah, ah!” shrieked Amelia, in a tone of horror; “I feel it twining down the back of my neck. Oh, oh! take hold of its tail—stop it!”

“I’ll not touch the reptile,” said I; “I’m sure it’s a rattlesnake. Wait till I”——

“Oh! I am dying—I feel it stinging me. Ah, ah!—there again,” interrupted my wife, throwing herself with all her force on the ground; and the snake, finding itself, I suspect, in no very comfortable quarters under Amelia, who is corpulently inclined, abandoned its posi-

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

tion, and, to its victim's horror, glided across her mouth in its progress. She then got up; and the driver, who was divulging in a fit of laughter at her expense, soon extirpated the reptile, which he pronounced of the most harmless dispositions. However, nothing could induce either of us to taste the pie again; on which the man and his companion breakfasted, and enjoyed a hearty laugh at our expense.

Nothing more occurred till we arrived at the place where I intended to settle, as it is called; and we got to the tavern just before sunset. Here we had some tea; and then went to the balcony, where we remained talking of our prospects in Canada till we were completely discomfited by whole swarms of mosquitoes, that fastened on our hands and faces in such a manner as to occasion us some pain.

In a few moments I became disagreeably itchy; and as we were scratching the blains in very agony, a person told us with a grave face that doing so only made them worse, as if it were possible to help it. In the irritation of my nerves, I answered him very tartly; and on his laughing, grew so angry that I quite forgot myself, and in the end made him equally furious.

From that time to this I have reason to repent having so given way to my temper; but to the irritation produced by the bites of the mosquitoes I attribute all the misfortunes that I experienced in that part of the country; for I have reason to believe that this person went about the village, and stirred them up against me.

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

The next day I purchased a convenient house, and removed my goods into it without delay; and after being occupied a fortnight with carpenters, joiners, etc., I placed my commodities in excellent order (the remainder having duly arrived), and was quite prepared to receive customers.

My store, as they called it, being opened, the people of the village immediately flocked to it, and bargained for articles, which, to my astonishment, they were about to carry away without paying; and on asking them for money, they impertinently shrugged their shoulders, and went away leaving the things behind them. Strange as it may appear, it is the fact that not one of those who entered the shop purchased an article: all without exception, on my demanding the price, muttered some outlandish gibberish and walked out.

“ Well,” says I to myself, “ these are the poor people of the village, who are trying to get me wheedled out of my property; those that can pay will come to-morrow.”

But the next day, and the one following, not the shadow of a customer crossed my threshold, and I began to fidget; but I shall always think that it arose from that quarrel I had at the inn; and what makes me more certain is, that the same individual told me that the reason I had no custom was because I did not give credit, as if I should have trusted persons I never saw in my life before. They were, however, to say the mildest thing of them, barbarians; for they could not speak a Christian tongue, but uttered gibberish, and laughed one with an-

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

other as they left the shop. As a proof of their utter foolishness, when I was shewing some capital cloth to one of these habitans, as they are called, he held up his garment, and said, with a corresponding shrug, "It isn't as goot as dat;" when it was better beyond comparison. But my store-keeping business was fast coming to a conclusion; and the following incident certainly tended to hasten its consummation.

It was the evening of the fifth day after my opening shop in Labois that I was sitting behind the counter, wondering when the great trade that had been promised me was to come, as my money was beginning to run short, and I had not sold an article, when my wife came in and said, in a low squeaking voice, "Oh, oh! we'll all be killed now, for an evil spirit, in the shape of a turkey-poult, is flying about in the store-room."

I started up in haste and went to the door, but, being imbued with Amelia's fears, first held my ear to the key-hole, and to my petrification I heard a loud flapping in the room. Notwithstanding my trepidation, I determined to see what it was; therefore I desired my wife to get a candle, while I went and fetched the gun. Without delay both errands were executed; and having ascertained that the fowling-piece was loaded, I told Amelia to open the door and go in first with the candle, that I might have a light to see and shoot the intruder, if it was in a tangible form. To this my wife objected; but I remarked it was necessary one should go first, and that if I went first with the gun I would not be able to see

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

how to fire, but if she went in with the light I would shoot before the creature could attack her.

After some delay she agreed, and with a trembling hand turned the key and entered. Just as I was about to follow, a blast of wind blew out the light and slammed the door in my face. There was an instant's pause, and then a scream arose from within the room that went through my head with unparalleled acuteness; I shall never forget it. Another moment of silence, and then a second shriek, following by a grappling of fingers at the door, which I was unable to open. It turned out afterwards that I was pulling it the wrong way, and by that means preventing Amelia from getting out; but the energy of terror in her overcame my opposition, and burst ing out, she rushed away with great speed, leaving me alone in the dark. Nothing could persuade her to return; and I was therefore compelled to go for a neighbour.

The first person that I addressed myself to immediately agreed to come; and having got another candle, we proceeded to the room. Hardly had we entered when, on casting my eyes around, I perceived a great thing flying about. I watched it till it settled; and then, taking good aim, fired and shot it. With great alacrity, Lafatu, as my companion was called, picked it up, and shewed it to me. It was an owl, and not remarkable for beauty. In triumph we left the scene of action, and went into the parlour, where we found Amelia on the tiptoes of expectation to hear what it was. On being informed, she set about making tea, to which I invited my ally.

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

During tea the conversation was for the most part concerning our fright; and the evening passed very pleasantly; for Lafatu related a number of curious and marvellous stories; one of which seemed to me rather too extraordinary. Our guest said that he knew a man who affirmed that he had once fired at such an immense flock of pigeons, that, having aimed rather too low, he shot off more than a bushel of legs.

Next morning I went to my store-room to see whether I had injured anything by the shot; and on taking down the bundle of worsted, it all fell to pieces, each hank being cut through and through, and greatly singed by the flame. There was five guineas' worth totally destroyed. It was heart-breaking; and I immediately went into conclave with my wife, who agreed with me that we were evidently not succeeding in the store-keeping line; wherefore I proposed that we should dispose of all our goods and betake ourselves to farming. She, however, to do her justice, said that she was certain we would not succeed in making money that way; but I silenced her by asking her to shew what way we could do better.

Accordingly, that same day, I went to our rival in the village trade, and struck a bargain with him for both the goods and the house.

The next week I left Labois, but with a much smaller retinue than when I entered it a month before, being only attended by one wagon. During the week I had come to the determination to settle in the township of Inverness; and, having arrived there, purchased a two

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

hundred acre lot on the banks of a small stream, and at once contracted with two men to build a house and clear ten acres of land for me.

On the third week I entered on my land, the house having been put up and the greater part of my bargain finished. I had provided myself with the necessary woodman's utensils, and having seen the progress of the men I had hired, now thought myself capable of cutting down the trees that grew around.

I had resolved to follow their modes in everything, and, among others, had noticed that they never wore coats (I was afterwards told that they were at the time in pledge for whisky); accordingly, I took off mine, and worked hard for the first two days, when I began to feel pains in my back and arms. I with great difficulty managed, however, to continue throughout the third; but the next morning I suffered so acutely on attempting to rise, that I was certain I had got the rheumatism by going without my coat. All that day I lay in³bed and had warm clothes and flannels swathed about me, and, on the suggestion of my wife, suffered a mustard blister to be applied. These remedies, in five days, succeeded in allaying the pains, and on the sixth I left my room, but could not stand upright; on the contrary, I had to get two sticks, and move forward, stooping very much, only now and then lifting my head to see I did not run against stumps. That evening I was, in spite of the exhortations of my well-meaning spouse, round the edge of my clearing, and examining the place where I

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

thought I could best renew my operations. After moving about a little in my stooping manner, I lifted up my head to see where I was going, and to my horror perceived a great bear wriggling its jaws and advancing towards me. I chose the lesser evil of the two, and disregarding the pain in my back, rushed to the house at the top of my speed. On getting in, I locked and bolted the door, and went to the bedroom window (for we had that unusual thing—a two-storey house), from which I saw the bear very scientifically pull down the pig sty and remove a fine fat pig we were intending to have killed for our Christmas dinner. The squeaking of the victim brought my wife, who, with great daring but little prudence, ran towards the thief, but, fortunately for herself, fell before she was up to it, having put her toe under the exposed root of a tree: I say fortunately, although she broke her arm in the descent; but to our great satisfaction it was soon healed, though the doctor's bill was anything but a trifle.

Every one who knows anything of Canada must have heard of the shocking winters of the Lower Province; and as the cold weather approached, I began to get rather terrified as to the result, it being the first winter I had been there. Accordingly I hired five immense stoves, one for the kitchen, one for the parlour, and the rest for the bedrooms, for which I paid five-and-twenty dollars. Indeed, this way I found was common with those who were not determined as to their stay; and as I had moved so much of late, I thought it was better

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

than to purchase them. I then busied myself in cutting firewood, but the trees on my lot were, unfortunately, soft wood, which does not burn well; and what with being green, and what with being soft, we were placed in rather a disagreeable situation, as will be seen in the sequel. But, to tell the truth, I must say that my constitution was more adapted to cut and measure cords of lacings than cords of wood. It was while I was thus engaged that I discovered that what I and my wife had imagined to be the rheumatism, was merely the pains occasioned by such unusual hard work, and not at all to be regarded, though it was no joke at the time.

It was about the middle of January, and a bitter cold morning, for a piercing north wind, that nothing could repel, having arisen, we, as may be expected, instantly set about lighting a fire. Shivering and shaking with cold did I view Amelia's vain efforts to strike a light, in trying to effect which she only bruised her fingers, and failed in eliciting a single spark for at least five minutes. When at length that desirable object was attained, a candle having been lighted, we discovered that there was no wood in the house, and I had, therefore, to go to the shed where it was, a distance of about seventy yards. Although I knew it was a very cold morning, yet I thought as it was so near it would be needless to put on a greatcoat or gloves, therefore, I rushed forth, and was instantly enveloped in a violent *poudre*, which almost blinded me, and cut my face to the bone. Though the wood was, as I have said, so close at hand, it was full

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

three minutes before I reached it. Having loaded myself, I again entered the whirlwind of ice and snow; and though my hands were dreadfully cold, yet I managed to carry my load almost to the door, where, being unable to retain it any longer, I let go, and tumbled in half frozen to death: both my hands and the tip of my ear were frozen, which it took some time to get into their original state. Meanwhile Amelia ran out and brought in the firewood; yet it was so green and wet with melted snow, that it was full three quarters of an hour before it was kindled, during which period we were in a lamentable state, cold and comfortless within, while we could hear the bleak, biting wind rushing without, whirling the small frozen snow into every cranny and crevice that it could get near, and threatening destruction to any one who should attempt to go out.

This, with one or two others like it, were the only days that no one could have gone out in; for, with these exceptions, all the subsequent ones were, though cold, yet so clear and bracing that the weather was exceedingly pleasant, and when warmly wrapped up, sleighing was a very convenient and agreeable way of travelling. But I ought to mention that, in the beginning of the winter, before the snow fell, there being a good deal of skating, I was persuaded to try and learn myself; but the first day was sufficient, and I never again troubled any one to lend me their skates.

During this winter an unusual quantity of snow fell, and covered the roofs of the houses for some depth.

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

While the frost lasted it was prevented from sliding off; but when spring approached and the days grew warmer, it loosened its hold on the roof, and would slide off in a great heap. One night, having occasion to go for something or other to the store, Amelia went out while I waited for her return. As the store was not more than ten minutes' walk, she had not thought it needful that I should go with her, though the night was as black as pitch.

For at least half an hour I sat ruminating beside the stove, listening to the snow falling off the roof, when my attention was roused by hearing a great portion slide off with a vast din, and at the same instant I imagined I heard a faint outcry; but as nothing followed, I sat still, greatly rejoicing that so much had fallen, as its melting on the roof made the house very damp, and likewise thinking it would greatly lessen my labour in throwing the remainder off, as I had intended to do on the morrow.

I waited for about ten minutes longer, reflecting on my fortunes in Canada, and revolving in my mind the events that had happened within the last twelve months—my two-fold emigration, first from England, and then from the village where I had kept store, and hoping that I was now fairly settled for life, when I suddenly recollected my wife, who I found had been absent for some time more than was necessary. Wondering what could have delayed her, I stepped to the window and looked out: all was dark and dismal, and I could not see farther than

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

an immense mound of snow that had slid off the house. On finding how useless it was to remain looking for her from the window, I shut it and returned to the stove; but becoming uneasy, I silently, and with a kind of stealth, reached my hat and coat from the peg, and putting them on, resolved to go out and look for the missing Amelia. As the road was straight, I was under no apprehension of losing my way, and therefore, climbing over the aforesaid high pile of snow, I hastened towards the store, hoping to meet her on the road, when the thought struck me that she was lying buried under the heap before my house. Having, therefore, called a neighbour, we procured torches, and looked for her tracks in the snow.

As we were going along, my companion eyeing me in a curious manner, said—

“ Between neighbours I don’t intend to say anything, but you had better make off before it’s known.”

“ What’s known? ” answered I, much astonished at his words.

“ Oh,” said he, “ you are quite safe with me; you need not fear my informing.”

“ What do you mean? ” cried I, in some alarm.

“ Only that you might not have met with any other person so accommodating. I have killed a man myself.”

I started back from him in horror, and then asked, though almost choked with fear—

“ Do you suppose I’ve killed my wife? ”

“ Certainly,” said he; “ or what are these spades for?

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

but you ought to have chosen a better time—waited till the frost was out of the ground; it will be hard work to dig through.”

I was quite thunderstruck; so much so, that I dropped my spade, which he perceiving, added,

“ You may rely on me; only be off as quick as you can, for all the people hereabouts are expecting it, as they saw that you could be here for no other reason than to get rid of her, being nothing of a farmer.”

Here I interrupted him, having recovered my breath and faculty of speech, both which had deserted me; and after some time made him understand that it was to dig her up that I required his assistance.

Having by this time reached the mound of snow, the mystery of her disappearance was cleared up by our perceiving one of her feet sticking up. We soon extricated her, almost dead with bruises, wet, and want of air: indeed, she would have been suffocated, had not her head got beneath the platform before the house.

As I had received something of a fright when my auxiliary said he had killed a man, I asked him to come in with a very bad grace; which he perceived, and gave vent to shouts of laughter, whereof I was in a manner constrained to ask the cause; upon which he answered, still laughing, “ Why, Mr Needles, we saw you were a coward, and therefore determined among ourselves to have some sport with you; and I was just amusing myself with you the whole time.”

On hearing this, I asked him in and gave him a dram

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

to say nothing more about it; but, notwithstanding, the story was in everybody's mouth two days after, and it was always in my ears for a month. But to continue.

The next morning my wife awoke with a very bad cold, that confined her to the house for a fortnight; by which time the snow was nearly all off the ground, and the spring fairly set in. The persons who had maple trees on their lots now commenced making sugar for their consumption during the rest of the year. But I was unable to do this, as my lot was covered with *magnificent pines* and similar unprofitable trees; the sight of which, growing in great luxuriance, had induced me in my inexperience to take my present land in preference to that covered with far better trees. But the not being able to make sugar was the first and least of my manifold misfortunes while engaged in farming.

In stocking and clearing away my farm I had expended much the greater part of my money, and the remainder suffered a considerable diminution in preparing and putting in my crops. I shall not, however, waste time in describing the progress of their growth, and the multitude of cares I had to keep out the pigs and various other equally destructive animals.

This season happening to be a very bad one, my crops, when harvested, produced so little, and that little of such bad quality, that I found myself out of pocket; which was a very discouraging thing to a new settler, and occasioned many sad reminiscences of my shop in the Borough, both to myself and Amelia. But we knew

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

that, now we were out, we could not easily get back; so we mutually desisted from speaking on the subject.

Just before harvest I got engaged in a very disastrous occurrence, which arose from the following circumstances. One of my neighbours had a very large, ferocious sow, that he used to allow to wander about the road, and which frequently managed to get into the cornfields, where it would commit sad depredations. This great creature had often attempted to enter mine—indeed it had sometimes succeeded in effecting an entrance; but I had turned it out before it had done any injury. For several weeks I had missed it along the highway, and I began to think it was either sold or dead, and was therefore much rejoiced; when one morning I espied this huge sow, attended by fourteen smaller ones, routing and running through the best part of my field.

On seeing the injury the animal had done, I was very angry, particularly as I had requested her owner to keep her in; and therefore, resolving that it should do no more harm, I took down my gun and went to the field. On arriving at the spot, I found all the greater part of the wheat trodden down and rooted up; and my indignation being greatly increased by perceiving the extent of the damage, I took aim and fired at the sow, which was in the midst of its progeny.

When the smoke cleared away I discovered that my shot had taken effect, and that the mother and three or four of the piglings were shot. My anger would have been appeased with this, had not the remainder with

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

one accord rushed into another field. This raised my corruption anew; and, loading my gun, I pursued and killed three or four more. After having had the carcasses removed, I sent over to the owner to tell him what I had done. He came to me immediately in a great rage, and said that I must pay for them, or else he would go to law with me.

On hearing this threat, I answered, that if he would pay me for the loss I had sustained by them, then I would pay him for the pigs; but he would not agree to this fair offer, and left me, declaring that before long I would have to pay something more than the price of the "swinish multitude," or the massacre of the innocents, as he termed the number of the slain. And it was not long after harvest before I received a notice that he was prosecuting me.

I will not trouble the reader with an account of my case, which was a very lamentable one, and ended with a verdict against me, on what grounds I know not; but I had to pay a lawyer's bill, and for the pigs likewise. This dreadful result almost ruined me; and, to add to our affliction, I got an attack of the fever and ague, with which I was long laid up. But at length I recovered, just in time to experience the rigour of another winter, which was, like the former, a very fine, but cold one.

In the spring I suffered the loss of one of my oxen by the falling of a tree; and it was impossible to repair its loss, as I had hardly sufficient money left to crop my land. While in this deplorable situation, I received £20

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

from my father, accompanied with many hopes that we were succeeding in the farm, for he knew that I had left the store-keeping. This money restored me in some degrees, and I managed to live to the autumn; when I again had a miserable crop, although my neighbours had very good ones.

On my expressing my wonder at this circumstance, one of them had the kindness to tell me that I never would make a shilling out of my land, it was so poor; adding, " And those pine stumps will hold up their heads for at least twenty years to come, in spite of all you can do. I advise you to clear out for some better location."

On hearing this opinion from one who ought to know, and as I had no reason to disbelieve him, as every pains had been taken in vain to render the last crop more plentiful, I thought it was deserving of attention and consideration. Accordingly, after tea, I thus addressed Amelia on the subject: " We have now been in this country upwards of eighteen months, and nothing but vexation and loss have attended us ever since we set foot on it. We have expended almost all our money, sold our goods, and, in fact, have been step by step going on to ruin. I, therefore, think that we had better scrape together what money we can, and return home. But what say you? "

Her answer was quite accordant with my wishes. But she added: " I think you would have done better if you had followed my advice, and never had anything to do

THE METROPOLITAN EMIGRANT

with a farm, as I do not pretend to know anything about it; and the result proves you are no wiser than myself."

From this time we began to make preparations for our departure, which we had resolved should take place before winter. The selling of our furniture, farming utensils, oxen, etc., procured us the necessary sum. And as we could not hope to find a purchaser for the farm, we left it to receive a new coating of trees, and with all expedition set out for Quebec, which we expected to reach in two days, but which, by unusual rains and other circumstances, took us four; by which we arrived just in time to get on board the ship "Frederick," bound for London; thus escaping the fraudulent, or at least exorbitant, charges at the inns.

This time we had a rough, boisterous, four weeks' passage, in the course of which I enjoyed the felicity of many a good ducking, as, not being very sick this time, I stood for the most part on deck. Nothing remarkable happened throughout, and glad was I when the ship anchored at Gravesend; from whence I was soon conveyed in the steamboat to London; where, having taken a coach, I arrived about eight o'clock in the evening at my father's, where we stayed till we were re-established in another shop, into which I was right glad to enter, after having experienced in Canada the folly of emigration.

Fraser's Magazine, September 1835.

BOOKS BY WILLIAM ROUGHED

"Every page . . . is a sheer delight to the criminologist, the historian, or the more gentle reader."—*Scottish Historical Review*.

GLENGARRY'S WAY AND OTHER STUDIES

Price 10s. 6d.

CONTENTS

Glengarry's Way: a Footnote to "Waverley"—Plagium: a Footnote to "Guy Mannering"—Locusta in Scotland: a Familiar Survey of Poisoning, as practised in that Realm—Poison and Plagiary—The Strange Woman—The Last Tulzie—The Twenty-Seven Gods of Linlithgow—The Hard Case of Mr James Oliphant—The Hanging of James M'Kean: Lord Braxfield's Last Case—The Bi-Centenary of Lord Braxfield.

THE RIDDLE OF THE RUTHVENS AND OTHER STUDIES

Price 10s. 6d.

CONTENTS

The Riddle of the Ruthvens—The Real Braxfield—The Husband of Lady Grange—The Pack of the Travelling Merchant—Auld Auchindrayne—"Antique" Smith—The Abduction of Jean Kay—The Witches of North Berwick—Bargarran's Daughter—The Devil in Pittenweem—The Law and Mrs Yelverton—Nicol Muschet: His Crime and Cairn—The Master of Sinclair and the Fifteen—The Toll of the "Speedy Return"—The Adventures of David Haggart—Mackcoull and the Begbie Mystery—With Braxfield on the Bench—A Note on Robert Fergusson.

TWELVE SCOTS TRIALS

Price 7s. 6d.

CONTENTS

The Parson of Spott, 1570—The Doom of Lady Warriston, 1600—Touching one Major Weir, a Warlock, 1670—The Ordeal of Philip Stanfield, 1688—The Ghost of Sergeant Davis, 1754—Katharine Nairn, 1765—Keith of Northfield, 1766—"The Wife o' Denside," 1827—Concerning Christina Gilmour, 1844—The St Fergus Affair, 1854—The Dunecht Mystery, 1882—The Arran Murder, 1889.

W. GREEN & SON, LTD., ST GILES STREET, EDINBURGH

P3 Galt, John
8413 The howdie and other tales
A57H6
1923

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

